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POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION OF AMERICAN YOUTH--A REVIEW OF RESEARCH WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES.

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A REVIEW OF EXISTING RESEARCH WAS MADE ON THE TOPIC OF POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION OF AMERICAN YOUTH. THE AUTHOR POSED THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AS SUBTOPICS TO THE OVERALL RESEARCH REVIEW--(1) WHAT IS POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION, (2) WHAT DO YOUNG AMERICANS BELIEVE ABOUT POLITICS, (3) HOW DO YOUNG AMERICANS ACQUIRE POLITICAL BELIEFS, AND (4) HOW IMPORTANT IS EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING IN THE FORMATION OF POLITICAL BELIEFS. EACH OF THESE QUESTIONS WAS ANSWERED SEPARATELY, AND ALL ANSWERS WERE DOCUMENTED. IN ADDITION, SOME IMPLICATIONS OF POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION RESEARCH FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES PROGRAMS WERE DISCUSSED. A PARTICULAR EFFORT WAS MADE TO SHOW THE NEED FOR NEW EFFORTS TO OVERCOME TENDENCIES TO FORM CLOSED-MINDED ATTACHMENTS TO POLITICAL BELIEFS BY PROVIDING YOUNG PEOPLE WITH THE TOOLS TO THINK REFLECTIVELY AND TO CRITICALLY EXAMINE TRADITIONAL PRACTICES. (JH)

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POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION OF AMERICAN YOUTH: A REVIEW OF RESEARCH WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES

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FOREWORD

Assisted by a grant from the U. S. Office of Education, the Department of Government and the School of Education at Indiana University jointly established in July, 1966, the High School Curriculum Center in Government. The primary purpose of this Center is to prepare, to tryout, and to evaluate new materials and methods for teaching these materials for courses in civics and government in grades nine through twelve. Specifically, the Center is at work on materials for the ninth-grade Civics course and the eleventh- and twelfth-grade courses in American Government and American Problems.

It seemed obvious to me that any effort to write materials concerning civics and government for use in secondary schools without a prior examination of what students already believe and understand about government as a result of earlier learning experiences would face many frustrations and false starts. Therefore, Mr. John Patrick, a research associate for the Center, undertook a review of existing research on the topic of political socialization. He made no attempt to engage in original research; his assignment was to pull together into a single essay what seemed relevant from research on political socialization of American youth for secondary school social studies.

Although his original purpose was simply to prepare a working paper for the use of the Center staff, the result was a document that we believe to be immediately useful to a number of professional people, perhaps most importantly of all, to secondary school teachers of civics and government. Many studies have revealed that the results of scientific research do not often reach teachers until many years after the findings have been available. We, therefore, decided to make this pamphlet available to teachers, curriculum directors, and others who are interested in this problem and therefore accelerate the process of making research data available to non-specialists in a form they can easily use. Those who are familiar with research in political socialization will find much in this paper that is familiar to them, but they will also encounter some new formulations of well-known ideas and a few challenges to popular assumptions, particularly those relating to the significance of early learning in political socialization and those relating to anti-democratic attitudes of American youth.

This essay is intended primarily as a review of research. Those looking for prescriptions for selection of content and organization of the curriculum will be disappointed. However, Mr. Patrick has raised a number of questions at different points throughout his paper that suggest implications that might be drawn from the paper. It should be noted that while the research Mr. Patrick reports is the work of others, the reporting of this research, the questions he raises, and the implications he draws are entirely his own.

Howard Mehlinger
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in Government

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I. WHAT IS POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION?

When American children obey the commands of a policeman directing traffic, pledge allegiance to the flag, select a class president by majority vote, or profess a preference for democracy, they are conforming to politically relevant cultural norms; they are performing particular socially acceptable roles in response to cultural cues. This behavior results from political socialization, the gradual learning of sanctioned political conduct and beliefs.[1] Political socialization is one facet of socialization, the process through which an individual learns to become an acceptable member of the society in which he lives. Just as socialization pertains to an individual's conformity to his society's culture,[2] so political socialization refers to an individual's adaptation to his society's political culture.

Through political socialization individuals learn and internalize the particular ways of using power and authority that their society sanctions. This sanctioned political behavior is the society's approach to the solution of fundamental political problems, such as how to reconcile individual freedom with social control, and is transmitted from generation to generation; it constitutes the society's political culture. Political socialization involves the following component processes which an individual must experience in order to adequately assimilate a political culture: 1) learning politically relevant basic behavior disciplines and dispositions, such as a general disposition to forego immediate personal gratification in order to achieve a long-range group goal, that are necessary to the maintenance of a political order; 2) learning political aspirations, such as the desire to participate in politics, that are necessary to the continuation of a political order; 3) learning political roles and their supporting attitudes that enable an individual to behave in ways that are sanctioned by his political culture; 4) learning political skills that prepare an individual to effectively participate in the political affairs of his society; 5) learning information about political behavior, the structure of government, and political issues that assist an individual to make sensible political decisions.[3]

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[1] Fred I. Greenstein defines political socialization as, ". . . all political learning, formal and informal, deliberate and unplanned, at every stage of the life cycle, including not only explicitly political learning but also nominally non-political learning which affects political behavior, such as the learning of politically relevant social attitudes and the acquisition of politically relevant personality characteristics." (26:1)

Roberta Sigel says, "Political socialization is the gradual learning of the norms, attitudes, and behavior accepted and practiced by the ongoing political system. For example, members of a stable democratic system are expected to learn to effect change through elections through the application of group practice rather than through street riots or revolutions." (80:2)

[2] Culture is, "the pattern of all those arrangements, material or behavioral, which have been adopted by a society as the traditional ways of solving the problems of its members. Culture includes all the institutionalized ways and the implicit cultural beliefs, norms, values, and premises which underlie and govern conduct." (49:380)

Children learn sanctioned political behavior and beliefs both formally and informally, deliberately and incidentally in the home, in school, and in various interaction situations with peers and adults. This learning continues throughout a person's life, always strongly influenced by earlier learning. The end toward which this process functions is the development of individuals who are integrated into the political realm of their culture; who accept the approved motives, habits, and values relevant to the political system of their society; who transmit these political norms to future generations. This cultural heritage is so deeply rooted that we are seldom conscious of it. Consequently, many individuals often assume that the way people in their society do things is the truly "human,"

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[3] These component processes of political socialization entail both politically relevant facets of personality development and specific political learning. According to Fred I. Greenstein, "The former include basic dispositions, beliefs, and attitudes which affect political behavior. The latter involves 1) learning connected with the citizen role (partisan attachment, ideology, motivation to participate), 2) learning connected with the subject role (national loyalty, orientation toward authority, conceptions of the legitimacy of institutions), and 3) learning connected with recruitment to and performance of specialized roles, such as bureaucrat, party functionary, and legislator." (26:4)

"natural," or "proper" way, and that contrary behavior is "barbaric," "perverse," or "unreasonable." This ethnocentric viewpoint often stems from not understanding that most of our behavior is learned rather than instinctive, that this non-instinctive behavior may be changed through new learning, and that this learning may result in various equally viable, though differentiated, patterns of human behavior.

Political socialization produces a certain amount of conformity that is necessary to continuation of a given political order. Yet political behavior and beliefs need not become totally standardized, although they are shaped by the same political culture. For example, in a democratic political culture, the right to reasonable non-conformity and dissent is a basic value which is transmitted through the political socialization process. The extent to which individuals are open to a wide range of different experiences greatly affects the transmission of political beliefs. Since many agencies contribute to an individual's political socialization -- the family, the school, friends, voluntary organizations, mass media of communication -- the individual is open to the possibility of learning conflicting values. Thus, cross-pressures may be established that reduce conformity to any single group's values. In a pluralistic society, such as the United States of America, these cross-pressures greatly reduce the incidence of rigid, ideologically-based political behavior. Also, uniform and smooth transmission of political beliefs is impeded in a pluralistic society, comprised of various diverse groups or subcultures, because individuals who have distinct family, school, or peer group experiences are likely to develop distinctive approaches to politics. Finally, socialization is always modified by individual potentialities for learning. Obviously, a wide range of individual potentialities exists in any society. Political behavior is differentiated, because many individuals are incapable of learning certain political skills or roles. However, if political socialization does not inevitably produce total conformity in political behavior, it does limit the range of variation in politically relevant experience open to individuals in any given society, although the limits may be broad enough to permit much significant freedom of choice.

The stability, even the continued existence, of a political order depends ultimately upon political socialization. Whether an individual comes to terms successfully with his political world or becomes alienated from it is a function of this crucial process. Whether a political system is conservatively maintained, gradually altered, or radically reformed depends largely upon political socialization. In any society, the political socialization process can give rise both to loyalty and disloyalty, engagement and apathy, conformity and deviation. These conflicting tendencies are present in individuals as well as in groups. If a society's political culture is transmitted effectively to each new generation, then political stability is maintained.

The tasks of political socialization research are to sort out the conflicting tendencies of political loyalty and disloyalty, engagement and apathy, conformity and deviation that exist in a society, to identify the social agencies that influence political beliefs and behavior, to assess the relative importance of these various agencies of socialization, to note the extent and direction of change in the political order, to gauge the health, the vitality, the staying-power of a political system, and to recommend how the political socialization process might be more effectively directed and to what end.

Systematic studies of political socialization are of recent origin. A few pertinent studies were made during the period 1900-1955, but most significant research in this field has been done within the past few years. As political socialization research is relatively new and unrefined, many conclusions are highly tentative, sometimes conflicting, and often ambiguous. While much is known about the content of the political beliefs of American children, relatively little is known about how these beliefs are formed. Speculations about the process of political socialization are abundant, but positive knowledge is negligible.

No over-arching theoretical model adequately organizes and delimits political socialization research. Several existing theories deal with various particulars of the political socialization process. But no molar theory exists that defines relationships among all the variables pertinent to political socialization. No molar theory exists that relates political socialization to socialization generally and to the culture in which this socialization occurs. (81:11-17)

Current research methods consist almost entirely of various kinds of written questionnaires, that cannot provide a complete or precise picture of political values and the process by which they develop. Many of these questionnaires force responses into a set pattern; opportunities for unusual or unorthodox responses are curtailed. Often respondents seek to give the answers that they believe the researcher wants, or that their teacher approves. Even the best questionnaires cannot provide precise information about the factors that influence certain patterns of responses. Also, questionnaires may not accurately reflect political behavior, when they ask respondents to report what they would do in a given situation. A reported behavior may differ considerably from the individual's actual behavior in real-life circumstances. (81:2-11)

Despite evident shortcomings, political socialization research does have significance for American secondary school civics and government instruction. Political socialization is by no means a function primarily of particular secondary school social studies courses, or even of the formal educational system. Nevertheless, the school is a very important agent of political socialization in American society, and social studies courses, particularly civics and government, are consciously intended to further the adaptation of young people to the American political culture. The development of good citizenship (variously interpreted) remains the most frequently cited basic objective of civics and government teaching. Political socialization research can contribute to the achievement of this objective by helping to identify the norms that define good citizenship in American culture, the means for transmitting these norms, the relative effectiveness of these means, and the extent to which actual behavior conforms to stated values. Thus, the study of political socialization can contribute to the improvement of secondary school civics and government instruction by enriching our knowledge of what American youth believe about politics, of the extent to which these beliefs correspond to American political norms, of the contributions of formal political education to political socialization, and of the possible strategies for the improvement of political socialization through social studies education.

II. WHAT DO YOUNG AMERICANS BELIEVE ABOUT POLITICS?[4]

Stability has been a hallmark of the American political system, indicating the long-term positive force of political socialization in our society. Over one hundred years ago Alexis de Tocqueville noted the basic conservatism, the popular aversion to extremist ideas, and the coercive power of popular opinion that distinguished American politics. He predicted that revolutionary outbursts would become increasingly unlikely as the American nation matured, citing "the presence of the black race on the soil of the United States" as the only potential disturber of an elemental socio-political tranquility. (90:263-274) Subsequent events thoroughly substantiated de Tocqueville's keen intuition.

Recent political socialization research indicates that America's traditional political stability has rested upon the solid ground of generally favorable popular attitudes about government, political authority, law, political leaders, and the American political system.[5] These positive, supportive feelings appear to emerge at an early age; they are very well-developed among fourth-grade children. American elementary school children revere the role of President, feel that political leaders generally are benevolent, accept the authority of government as legitimate and just, and venerate patriotic symbols.[6] Often until the ages of nine or ten religion and patriotism are intermingled, with the result that God and country are worshiped indistinguishably. Our President, our government, our laws, our nation are perceived as righteous and virtuous, the forces of good in a sometimes evil world. (13, 14, 22)

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[4] This discussion concerns the main-stream political beliefs of most young Americans. The variation in political beliefs of young Americans due to low socio-economic status and sex identity is discussed in Part III-C of this paper.

[5] The research of Fred Greenstein, David Easton, and Jack Dennis is typical of inquiries by social scientists about children's political beliefs. In 1958 Greenstein administered questionnaires to a sample of 659 New Haven, Connecticut school children between the ages of nine and thirteen and of widely diversified socio-economic backgrounds. A small sub-sample of these children was interviewed. Easton and Dennis administered questionnaires to over 12,000 middle and working-class white children in grades two through eight, from large urban areas. A sub-sample of these children was interviewed.

[6] Greenstein reports that children's views of political leaders are considerably more favorable than those of adults. Comparing his data with the American Institute of Public Opinion's February, 1958 report of the President's popularity, Greenstein observed that American adults were about five times more willing to criticize the chief executive than were his sample of New Haven children. (22: 35-36)

Children rate the Presidential political role as more prestigious than other adult roles such as doctor, judge, school teacher, or religious leader. This attitude is entrenched firmly by age nine. It implies that children become aware of the importance of political roles well before the age of nine, focusing first upon the Presidential role, which for primary-grade children may personify government. (13, 22, 32)

From their focus upon the President, fourth and fifth-grade children develop an awareness first of national, then of local, then of state government. The national level of government is the first at which an awareness emerges of the general difference between executive and legislative functions. Comparable understanding of state government is not manifested until sixth grade. Awareness of the executive precedes awareness of the legislature at each level of government as the dominating and attention-getting roles of President, mayor, and governor tend to overshadow other aspects of government. Not until seventh grade do most children show an understanding of legislative attitudes equivalent to their comprehension of executive functions. (13, 22, 32) With increasing age children tend to focus upon Congress and the law-making process as the center of government. (13)

Pre-adolescents are disposed favorably toward political participation.[7]

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[7] Over 98 per cent of Greenstein's sample said that they would vote when they reached age twenty-one. Over two-thirds of the group said, "It makes much difference who wins an election." These sentiments contrast sharply with significantly smaller proportions of adults who have made similar statements in the Survey Research Center's election studies. For example, during the 1952 election campaign only a fifth of the respondents said, "It would make a great deal of difference to the country whether the Democrats or Republicans win the election." (22:36-37)

They believe that it is important to vote in public elections and that it makes a great deal of difference who wins an election. (22:35-36) They identify with a particular political party at an early age. Between sixty to seventy per cent of a given group of fourth-grade children profess a preference for the Republican or Democratic party. (22:36) This is identical with the frequency of party identification among young adults, ages 21-24, and corresponds closely to the seventy-five per cent of older Americans who are persistently loyal to a political party. (22:37)

During the elementary school years, most children learn to tolerate the kind of partisan political conflict associated with elections. They learn to accept the rights of individuals to align themselves into opposing political parties and to compete vigorously for election to public office. They consider power won according to the "rules of the game" as legitimate. Thus, at an early age children manifest acceptance of a major American political norm that is crucial to the functioning of a democratic society. They express both willingness to accept partisan conflict and the will of the majority as basic elements of the American political system. (14)

Children acquire generally favorable beliefs about political authority, political leaders, the political system, and political parties prior to basic relevant knowledge. Nine-year-old children who are aware of political authority roles and have positive feelings about these roles have little specific knowledge of these roles. Only a few fourth-grade children can describe the duties of the President.[8] They have virtually no knowledge about other aspects of government. Although a large number of fourth-grade children can state a political party preference, they have little information about the difference between the Republican and Democratic parties. Most fourth-graders are not aware of who political party leaders are or what a political party does.[9] Not until the seventh or eighth grade do children begin to buttress their political beliefs with pertinent political knowledge. Not until this time can they typically identify any significant differences between Republican and Democratic policies or even name prominent leaders of either party.[10] Not until this time are they oriented to political issues and ideologies. (14, 22)

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[8] Less than a fourth of the New Haven fourth-grade children could describe the President's duties. (22:58-59)

The extremely favorable attitudes of children about politics and governmental authority contrast strikingly with the cynicism and alienation found frequently among American adults.[11] Many adults believe that it does not make much difference who wins an election, that most politicians are corrupt, that voting is at best a choice between degrees of evil and maybe a complete waste of time, that government is not responsive to popular demands, that bad government is probably unavoidable, but endurable. These politically alienated individuals have noted the prevalent disparity between democratic political values and American political behavior, between the way they believe politics ought to be and the way they perceive it to be. This alienation may lead to apathy, cynical participation, or rebellion; to apolitical indifference, political self-seeking, or hyper-political revolutionary zeal. In American culture the usual consequences of political alienation are apathy (witness the typical proportionately low turnouts for elections) or cynicism, a willingness to go along with an unchangeable bad situation in order to get as much out of it as possible.[12] (54:391-392)

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[9] Although sixty per cent of nine-year-olds stated a party preference, only about thirty-three per cent could name even one public representative from either of the two major parties and less than twenty per cent could name a leader of either party. (22:71-73)

[10] Greenstein reports that even at the eighth-grade level only fifty per cent of the New Haven children were able to satisfactorily identify ideological differences between Democrats and Republicans. He said, "In terms of the Survey Research Center's index of ideological sophistication, we find that only six per cent of the eighth-graders make the kind of statements made by the 'most sophisticated' fifty-one per cent of the adult population -- references to a generalized liberal-conservative ideology and references to social class and other group differences in the party constituencies." (22:69)

[11] Easton and Hess suggest that adult political alienation does not influence the beliefs of most pre-adolescents, because, ". . . adults in the United States show a strong tendency to shelter young children from the realities of political life. In many ways it is comparable perhaps to the prudery of a Victorian era that sought to protect the child from what were thought to be the sordid facts of sex and parental conflict. In our society politics remains at the Victorian stage as far as children are concerned. . . . Adults tend to paint politics for the child in rosier hues. And the younger the child the more pronounced is this protective tendency." (14:244)

Political cynicism and alienation among adults have not seriously threatened American political stability. Indeed, widespread political apathy and disinterest may help account for this persistent stability; most politically disengaged Americans would rather not play the political game than attempt to actively undermine the system. Also, if all citizens were zealously engaged in political activity, persistent and severe disruptive clashes could result. More important, favorable beliefs about politics are implanted at an early age, and learning which takes place early in life is difficult to dislodge and to some degree makes a lasting imprint upon the personality, especially when it is founded upon emotion rather than information and reason. Negative attitudes about politics are learned just prior to adolescence, at the earliest. When adults experience conflict between their positive and negative attitudes about American politics, the positive attitudes often prevail, since they were learned earliest and were based upon affect and emotion rather than information and reason.[13] (22:53-54)

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[12] One should not conclude that the United States is filled with alienated, distrustful people. Compared with people in most other countries, Americans hold quite favorable attitudes about their political system. Most Americans seldom, if ever, impugn fundamentals of the American political order. However, when compared to the pristine simplicity of political beliefs of American children, the political beliefs of many American adults do manifest considerable cynicism and/or alienation.

It seems that the seeds of later adult political alienation are implanted during adolescence. As they approach adolescence, children begin a slow pattern of political "deidealization." Seventh and eighth-graders recognize that the President is not a "super-ordinary" human being, always wise, benevolent, and just; that he makes errors, some of them serious; that he is not necessarily benign and warmhearted; that he is not "the best person in the world." Children grow to differentiate between the Presidential institutions and the personal attributes of the incumbent. This allows for criticism of the President without diminishing basic allegiance to government and country. An appreciation develops for Presidential role demands and political expediency. Many seventh, eighth, and ninth-grade children believe that the President tries to behave publicly in certain exemplary ways only because he is expected to behave in these ways, and because he wants to get re-elected. (22:69; 81:14)

Increasing "deidealization" about politics continues throughout adolescence and may turn into disillusionment and cynicism, the grounds from which might emerge adult political alienation. Ordinarily, adolescence is a period when hallowed traditions are questioned for the first time, when idols are shattered, when elements of adult skepticism or cynicism are noticed. No longer are adults viewed so awesomely as the bearers of unmitigated justice and wisdom, no longer is the adult world so forbiddingly mysterious and fancifully sacrosanct. The favorable political attitudes of adolescents are shaken when they hear adults talk about "dirty politics," "political hacks," "crooked politicians"; when they become increasingly knowledgeable about the gap between political ideals preached at school, at church, or at home and sordid political practices disclosed in the newspapers, on television, or in informal family discussions. However, it is important to stress that despite obvious "deidealization" and increased sophistication about political matters, most American adolescents retain a generally positive image of government; and like a vast majority of American adults, most American adolescents seldom, if ever, impugn the most basic features of their political order. It appears that the positive tone of early childhood political learning contributes heavily to the general inclination of Americans to consider their political institutions as legitimate. (13, 14)

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[13] The importance and strength of early learning may stem from the high dependency of young children upon adults for basic drive satisfaction. See Part III-B and Part IV for discussion of factors which may modify the early childhood learning of political beliefs.

The positive supportive political beliefs instilled in young children frequently harden into political parochialism and closed-mindedness among adolescents. Considerable evidence has been collected to show that intolerance about political matters, which many American adults manifest, is well-developed among large numbers of adolescents. Numerous American teen-agers are highly ethnocentric and chauvinistic. Often moralistic fervor marks their loyalty to flag and country. (58:73) They rebuke political dissidence and non-conformity -- even to the point of disregarding, or not understanding, First Amendment guarantees. They indicate remarkably little affection for practical implementation of some basic civil liberties presumed to be a traditional part of the American way of life.

These attitudes are well illustrated by H. H. Remmers and associates in Anti-Democratic Attitudes in American Schools.[14] Overall, about one of every five students sampled did not agree with the freedoms written in the Bill of Rights. (36:57) On some issues the proportion of students manifesting "anti-democratic" attitudes was much higher. For example, sixty per cent of a large sample of American high school students agreed that local police should have the right to ban or censor certain books and movies in their cities. As many as forty per cent either agreed or said they probably agreed that, "people who have wild ideas and don't use good sense should not have the right to vote." Forty-three per cent said that books or movies which were "irreligious" or "atheistic" should be banned. Sixty-three per cent were against allowing communists to speak on the radio in peacetime. (77:63-65, 69)

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[14] The studies by Remmers and associates were based upon responses to questionnaires by random samples of from two to three thousand American high school students, which were stratified according to grade, sex, residence, geographical region, religious preference. The questionnaires were prepared and administered by the Purdue Opinion Panel during the 1950's.

Many of the students who rejected certain basic American ideals of freedom in the studies cited above tended to accept the tenets of fascism. These students were disposed toward authoritarianism and ethnocentrism. They agreed that the most important virtues children should learn are obedience and respect for authority; that most children need more discipline; that what our country needs most is a "few strong, courageous, tireless leaders in whom the people can put their faith"; that the very first requirement for good citizenship is obedience and proper respect for authority. (36:36; 61:127)

A definite majority of the students sampled by the Remmers' group reported intense patriotism to the American government and to the "American way of life." They believed, "patriotism and loyalty to established American ways are the most important requirements of good citizens," and "there is nothing lower than a person who does not feel a great love, gratitude and respect for our flag." Many students held that "the American way of life is superior in nearly all respects to any other." (36:40; 61:128)

Many of the American teen-agers, studied by Remmers and associates, manifested considerable prejudice against minority races or ethnic groups. They endorsed racially segregated schools, anti-miscegenation laws, and other restrictions upon close social contact between persons of different races. (77:69-71; 61:126) These white children were not inclined to favor Negro candidates for public office, although this opposition varied directly with the perceived importance of the office. While most whites typically opposed voting for a Negro candidate for President, Vice-President, governor, mayor, or similarly prestigious offices, they were less opposed to Negro candidates for lesser local or state offices. (46:93-96)

Recent research about the political beliefs of American adolescents, done by M. Kent Jennings and associates of the Survey Research Center, qualifies and adds to the studies of the Remmers' group.[15] (44) In contrast to the studies of adolescents by Remmers and associates in the 1950's, the current crop of high school students appears to be more cosmopolitan in political orientation, less chauvinistic, and more tolerant of political and social diversity. Like the students in the Remmers' study, Jennings' students showed strong positive feelings about the American political system, but many of their supportive beliefs appeared to be less rigid and narrow. Many "cosmopolitan" students in the Jennings' sample were willing to extend fundamental American political principles, such as freedom and equal rights, to minority ethnic groups and to political and social non-conformists.

Jennings reported that the large majority of the seniors in his sample showed more concern for international and national political affairs than for state and local matters. "In the aggregate the students lean much more toward the larger systems and higher levels than toward smaller systems and lower level, more toward a cosmopolitan than a provincial orientation." (44:7-8) The students who revealed a "cosmopolitan" political orientation tended to be more interested in and informed about both specific international affairs and public affairs generally than students who indicated a more "provincial" political orientation. "Politicization and cosmopolitanism occur in tandem." (44:25)

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[15] Jennings based his conclusions upon responses from a national probability sample of 1,669 twelfth-grade students from 97 secondary schools. (41:2)

Most students (seventy-nine per cent) in Jennings' sample reported more faith and confidence in national government than in state or local government. There was a strong correlation between a student's orientation toward a level of government and the trust expressed in that level of government. The more "cosmopolitan" students indicated a high level of confidence in our national government and low confidence in local government. (44:29-31)

Students who showed a "cosmopolitan" political orientation were inclined to tolerate international political diversity. Less "cosmopolitan" students were less open-minded, and "provincial" students revealed a propensity for chauvinism. This relationship was based upon student agreement or disagreement with the following assertion: "The American system of government is one that all nations should have." Most of the "cosmopolitan" students rejected this statement, while many "provincial" students agreed with it. (44:34-35)

Jennings' "cosmopolitan" students were not as open-minded about domestic, deviant, political and social behavior as they were about alien political systems. Only a moderate relationship was indicated between a "cosmopolitan" political orientation and a general tolerance of non-conforming social and political behavior. This conclusion was based upon student agreement or disagreement with the following statements: 1) "If a person wanted to make a speech in this community against churches and religion, he should be allowed to speak"; and 2) "If a Communist were legally elected to some public office around here, the people should allow him to take office." Even though "cosmopolitan" political orientation and agreement with the above statements was only moderate, Jennings concluded that ". . . there is clearly some linkage again between cosmopolitanism and tolerance of social and political diversity." (44:36)

Another study by Jennings revealed that current civil rights issues were more salient for the twelfth-grade adolescents of his sample than any other "liberty issue." The students in Jennings' sample reported that they discussed civil rights issues more frequently than any other political topics dealing with freedom and rights. Also, the majority of these students cited civil rights and race relations as the "thing they were least proud of as an American." Only six per cent of these students held a definitely anti-Negro belief, while thirty-one per cent were definitely pro-Negro and anti-bigotry. The other respondents indicated "no clear affect" concerning pro- or anti-Negro feelings. In response to a question about "those things they were most proud of as Americans," a majority of the students in Jennings' sample stressed their pride in the American political values of "freedom and rights." This response indicated a general positive orientation toward fundamental American political ideals and toward the American political system. (42:11-15)

One might conclude, based upon the various studies discussed here, that young Americans from early childhood to adolescence have positive feelings about their political system. The process of political socialization has functioned effectively to produce young Americans who accept the fundamental tenets of the American political culture and to maintain political order and stability. Even the "anti-democratic attitudes" of American youth, reported by Remmers and associates, may have contributed to the traditional American political stability. To a considerable extent, they represent conformity to customary practices, to the socio-political status quo.[16] They serve to distinguish a generalized in-group, which is entitled to all privileges of the prevailing political order, from various out-groups, which for sundry reasons do not qualify for some or any of these special rights. Often these "anti-democratic attitudes" are somehow linked to loyalty and devotion to hallowed tradition, to the various symbols of political authority and righteousness, to the precepts of obedience and discipline. Often the most outwardly patriotic Americans are the most ready to prevent extension of traditional civil liberties, the most ethnocentric, the most willing to stress authority and discipline as bulwarks against change. Insofar as these intolerant beliefs do not stimulate underprivileged groups, against whom they are directed, to lash-out violently and destructively against the system, they will not *per se* disturb political equilibrium. But the Negro Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's may represent a portent of the pent-up hostility and resentment against these "anti-democratic attitudes" which could severely imperil our tradition of socio-political stability, of gradual, peaceful, lawful change.

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[16] A recent Harris survey reported a nation-wide tendency (fifty-six per cent of a nationally representative sample) to be generally intolerant of deviant social and political behavior. (28)

The political socialization process in a pluralistic society with democratic aspirations is complicated by conflict between desires to tolerate diversity, non-conformity, and dissent and pressures toward homogeneity, conformity, and orthodoxy. Democracy entails institutionalization of the right to reasonable dissent and toleration of heterodoxy. Protection of the rights of minority ethnic, religious, and political groups is a democratic axiom. Most political scientists agree that characteristics of the "democratic man" are belief in the worth and dignity of individuals, open-mindedness toward different viewpoints and toleration of heterodox values, readiness to accept compromise and change, stress on individual freedom, distrust of powerful authority, disposition to share and cooperate rather than to monopolize or dominate, tendencies to explore and inquire into many values rather than blind acceptance of all-consuming ultimate ends.[17] (10:91) However, any society with democratic aspirations contains pressures that undercut the development of model, democratic political behavior. Every society needs to instill loyalty to state and nation, to sanctioned political values. National cohesion and political stability depend upon conformity to the *status quo*. Consequently, there is always present the possibility that the process of instilling culturally approved political beliefs and behavior (even when toleration for diversity is a culturally approved belief) will block receptivity to particular new and better ideas, will prevent toleration of certain types of diversity, will bring about closed-minded parochialism, and thus, will militate against the realization of certain democratic aspirations.

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[17] This description of the "democratic man" is based upon general agreement found among the writings of political scientists and political philosophers. There is little systematic empirical evidence in support of this description.

The tendency of the political socialization process in America to generate many individuals who express intolerant political beliefs raises some important questions. In a society that aspires to democratic ideals, is mere devotion and conformity to the political status quo sufficient to the attainment of good citizenship? Is skill and disposition to critically examine political ideas and to accept no political or social doctrine as infallible necessary to good democratic citizenship? What should be the place of indoctrination, propaganda, and critical reflective inquiry in the formal political education of American youth? Consideration of these questions is basic to any effort to improve political socialization through formal political education.

III. HOW DO YOUNG AMERICANS ACQUIRE POLITICAL BELIEFS?

In order to improve political socialization through formal political education, one must know how young Americans acquire political beliefs. One needs to ascertain the school's potential for influencing political beliefs, relative to other agents of political socialization, and the extent to which formal education in America achieves this political socialization potential.

In American society, the family and the school appear to be the major forces in political socialization. Here the child's fundamental political viewpoint is molded and the groundwork is laid for adult political behavior. But controversy and indeterminacy persist about the relative influence of home and school in shaping political beliefs and behavior. Also a number of other influences have an impact upon political socialization, such as various peer groups, mass communications media, socio-economic status. Uncertainty prevails about the precise effect of these factors in determining political attitudes and actions.

Controversy about the process of political socialization has focused upon the following questions which have significance for secondary school social studies education:

1. What are the relative contributions of the home and the school to the process of political socialization?
2. How important is early childhood learning in the shaping of political beliefs and behavior?
3. To what extent can formal education alter political values which have been formed in the home?
4. What has been the impact of formal education generally and of specific political education programs in influencing political behavior and beliefs?
5. What strategies appear to be most helpful for improving the political socialization of American youth through formal political education?

Although political socialization research has not yet provided certain answers to these questions, important information has been acquired which can assist social studies educators.

A. The Family As Shaper Of Basic Political Values[18]

The American home has been a bulwark of political stability by inculcating early loyalty to country and government, acceptance of fundamental political norms, and allegiance to one of the established political parties. Before children enter elementary school, they are taught at home to differentiate between private and public sectors of life and to recognize that in public matters the higher authority of government must be respected and obeyed. Through family inter-relationships American children learn a basic orientation to authority which provides a life-long context for political behavior. These family authority patterns tend to generate positive feelings in children toward their immediate home environment, and these positive feelings usually are transferred to the larger world of political affairs. Thus, all social scientists recognize the American family as a primary agency of political socialization.

In American society family authority patterns tend to be relatively permissive and equalitarian.[19] Generally the father is not the sole and over-bearing authority figure that he is in Germany, Japan, or Buganda. Usually the American child has ample opportunity to voice opinions and share in certain kinds of family decision-making. Consequently, occasion for rebellion against family authority is less frequent than in many other societies. Indeed, severe childhood rebellion is far from normal in American society. When such rebellions do occur, they usually do not involve politics, but rather are directed against traditional religious beliefs or social customs.[20] (17:277-280; 41:4; 50:268-282)

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[18] Although this discussion points out the strong influence that the family may have upon political behavior and beliefs, it should not be construed as suggesting that political beliefs and behavior are merely a function of the home.

[19] Robert E. Lane's intensive small-scale research strongly substantiates this discussion of family authority patterns. Lane's research methodology is typical of the intensive in-depth interviews of a very small random sample which is sometimes used in conjunction with or as an alternative to more extensive large-scale random sampling of beliefs via questionnaires. In this case, Lane's sample consisted of fifteen men from an Atlantic seaboard urban area labeled Eastport. (50:1-11)

The typical relatively permissive father-son relationships in American families appear to contribute to the acceptance of political norms, to positive feelings about government, politics, law, political leaders and the American political system. Lane hypothesizes that these father-son relationships typically generate political idealism based upon a positive and optimistic view of human nature and the future of mankind, because American fathers so often represent security, support, friendship, and trust to their children. (50:281-282) By contrast Belgian and French parents usually over-protect and over-direct their children in a manner which makes the outside world seem hostile and treacherous. This appears to contribute to childhood feelings of political distrust and accounts for prevalent negative political attitudes among French and Belgian adults. (75:67-70)

The relatively permissive and equalitarian patterns of authority in American families develop rather widespread potential effectiveness in political participation. Compared to children in other lands, such as Mexico, Italy, or Germany, American children are much freer to speak out about their problems, to criticize their elders, and to participate significantly in family discussions. Extensive opportunity for children to participate in decision-making, to develop poise in articulating an argument, and to gain skills in compromise, can be viewed as a major buttress of American democratic politics. The discouragement of free childhood expression in some other cultures is probably an important explanation for their inadequacy or difficulty in developing or sustaining a democratic political order. (1:346-363)

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[20] Elizabeth Douvan and Martin Gold report, "In the large-scale studies of normal populations, we do not find adolescents clamoring for freedom or for release from unjust restraint. We do not find rebellious resistance to authority as a dominant theme. For the most part, the evidence bespeaks a modal pattern considerably more peaceful (and dull) than much theory and most social comment would lead us to expect." (41:4)

Another important consequence of the authority patterns common to American families is transmission of political party preference from parents to children in much the same way that religious identification is passed on. Most American children are literally born into a political party identification that persists through adulthood.[21] For example, in 1952 seventy-two per cent of the Survey Research Center respondents who reported that both their parents had been Democrats were also Democrats. Sixty-three per cent of the children of Republican parents were Republican. (4:99) This general loyalty to parental political party preference is so strong that neither attractive candidates nor explosive issues will often lead a voter to abandon customary party identification. Only crucial social events, such as a long destructive war or a depression are able to shake large numbers of people away from their family political party traditions. (21:33) An important factor in the persistence of early political party identification is later reinforcement by new reference groups. But individuals socially mobile enough to enter new group associations, that contradict earlier political dispositions, are prone to modify even such solid political preferences as party identity.[22]

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[21] M. Kent Jennings and Richard G. Neimi report, based on a study of a nationally representative sample of 1,669 twelfth-grade students and 1,992 parents of these students that, "Parent-student correspondences differ widely depending upon the values considered, with party identification standing highest, though even that value represents a distinct departure from perfect transmission." (41:1)

Political awareness and activity may often stem from parental emulation. For example, American state legislators tend to come from highly politicized families, families in which one or both parents are politically active. Their interest in politics appears to have been generated through intimate and pleasurable family associations, where they were given ample opportunity to gain political experience, where they were stimulated to emulate the political behavior of a respected parent. By contrast, formal courses in high school civics or government do not seem to have much effect in persuading American state legislators to enter political life.[23] (19) The family is also a spawning ground for political campaign workers and party functionaries; most of these individuals come from politicized families. (62:209) Individuals from families where neither parent voted show a great tendency to avoid party attachments; individuals from families where parents did not keep up with political affairs through regular attention to newspapers, news magazines, or news broadcasts also tend to be unaware of and ignorant about politics. (37:68) However, higher education serves to overcome politically limiting family influences. College graduates from non-politicized families are more likely than lesser educated individuals to be well-informed about politics and capable of effective political action.

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[22] See Part III-C for discussion of the influence of socio-economic status upon political beliefs and behavior.

[23] Interviews with a nationally representative sample of American state legislators by Eulau and associates indicated, "Ties with a political party, consciousness of public issues, knowledge of both the serious and pleasurable aspects of political behavior or sense of public responsibility appear as products of political socialization in the most intimate form of primary group life." (19:307) By contrast Eulau reported, "The study of civics, politics or related subjects does not seem to serve as a potent lubricant of political consciousness or interest." (19:308)

Transmission of a pattern of public issue orientations or a political ideology occurs later than party identification and is more open to non-family influences. Ideological orientation and complex issue resolutions call for more political knowledge and awareness than is possessed by the young child. They are removed from the concerns of the child, and are more salient and relevant to adolescents and young adults. Often the family is less influential in the political socialization that takes place at this point -- being replaced by friendship groups, work groups, educational experiences or crucial cultural events. (1:366-374; 37:74) Since the major American political parties generally manifest scant ideological differences, the traditional transmission of party preference from parent to child does not determine a wide range of attitudes about public issues.

Many social scientists have concluded that the foremost agency of political socialization is the home, that the most important source of children's conceptions about political behavior is the inadvertent political learning that takes place in the family, and that the family inculcates basic political beliefs. According to this view other agents of political socialization, such as the school, merely build upon this foundation. Early political beliefs continue to affect political behavior throughout a lifetime. As James C. Davies has stated, "Even the aged citizen who freely and secretly casts his last ballot in an election that presents free alternatives to him is never quite free of those people who have influenced him -- most particularly his childhood family. And the political leader, like all others, likewise remains under the influence of his family background -- if not in the content, then at least in the style of his rule." (11:11) According to this viewpoint, political beliefs tend to be passed from generation to generation in an unbroken chain, and the family is society's primary stabilizing and conservative political force.

The importance and strength of the family as an agent of political socialization is attributed to the great dependence of young children upon adults for basic drive satisfaction. A basic drive, such as hunger, thirst, or sex is an organic tension that creates discomfort. Man is motivated to activity that mitigates or relieves the tension and discomfort. During the long childhood period of physical dependence upon adults for drive satisfaction, the child develops strong emotional attachments to those who care for him. This emotional attachment moves the child to become amenable to social direction and control, and the child tends to accept the adults, who help him to satisfy basic drives, as behavior models.

James C. Davies uses Abraham Maslow's need-satisfaction hierarchy to hypothesize that the family's central role in shaping political values stems from its efficacy in satisfying the child's basic innate needs. According to Maslow's need hierarchy, these are "the physical needs for food, clothing, shelter, health, and safety from bodily harm; the need for love and affection; the need for self-esteem; and the need for self-actualization." According to Davies, "self-actualization" through political activity, or other activity, is not possible until the lower-order needs have been satisfied. Since the family is usually the source of this need satisfaction, it becomes "the central reason that the individual comes to think and act like his family more than he thinks and acts like those who are less relevant to his need satisfactions." Conversely Davies hypothesizes that, "The general political apathy (and transient hyperexcitability) -- the lack of politicization -- that still prevails in most of the world is traceable to the apathy (and transient hyperexcitability) resulting from childhood deprivation of these basic needs within the family." (11:11-13)

Contrary to Davies, Harold Lasswell suggests that entry into political activity serves to compensate for the inadequate way in which personality needs have been met. Lasswell's formula for political man -- "private motives transformed into displacement onto public objects transformed into rationalization in terms of public interests equals political man" -- illustrates his hypothesis that political behavior becomes an outlet for the damaged or disturbed personality that is seeking some sort of withheld compensation or deferred satisfaction. Lasswell further speculates that the pattern of family relationships in childhood leads to either of two basic developmental political types -- the agitator or the administrator. (53)

Recently the traditional stress upon the overwhelming importance of the family in political socialization has been challenged. Robert Hess and Judith Torney have concluded, on the basis of an extensive study of elementary grade children, that in the United States the public elementary school is the most important agent of political socialization. (34) They acknowledged the strong influence of the family, but they suggested that its primary importance is restricted to only a few areas of political socialization, such as promoting early loyalty to country and government and acceptance of certain fundamental and unquestioned cultural political norms.

M. Kent Jennings and Richard G. Niemi have just completed a study that suggests that aside from a certain few basic political values in our culture, transmitted by most parents to most children, parental political values are a highly variable and inaccurate guide to the political values of pre-adults. Concerning correspondence between particular political opinions of parents and high school seniors, Jennings and Niemi found that there is only a moderately strong positive correlation on salient, concrete issues and weak or virtually no positive correlation on more abstract and less immediate issues. Concerning attitudes about particular socio-political groupings, such as Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Negroes, Whites, Labor Unions, Big Business, and Southerners, Jennings and Niemi found the correlations between the views of twelfth-grade students and their parents to range from moderately positive to very slightly positive. These low correlations suggest a minimal family influence upon value formation concerning specific issues and groups. (41)

The urban, industrialized character of American society may somewhat account for a restricted family influence upon political behavior and beliefs. In simple agrarian or hunting and gathering societies, the family impact upon political socialization is overwhelming, because the family has a continuing and nearly exclusive access to control over the child's behavior. There is not likely to be extensive value conflict with the society, so that the values of family and non-family groups tend to reinforce one another. Since the family serves as the direct avenue by which the child enters adult society, the values learned in the home tend to be immediately functional and practicable. As an adolescent and as an adult, most individuals continue to live among the adults who socialized them and the peers with whom they were socialized; this continuing association strongly supports conformity to values learned in the home. By contrast, in modern, urban, industrialized societies several basic social forces lessen the family socialization role. Many other specialized social agencies contribute importantly to the socialization process, including the school, the church, the summer camp, and formal youth groups. This away-from-home socialization is often conducted impersonally by relative strangers, toward whom the child usually has relatively weak emotional attachments. The various agencies of socialization in a modern society typically create cross-pressures by teaching conflicting values to the child that may undercut family tradition and values. Individuals tend to be mobile, to live as adults away from the constraining influence of the family and the community in which they were reared. (7:106-112)

The controversy over the relative importance of the home as an agent of political socialization has important implications for formal schooling. If the child's foundation of political values is laid unalterably in the home, then social studies education can do little to affect significantly political beliefs and behavior. But the extent and force of family influence in political socialization has yet to be determined precisely; and new evidence suggests that the family may be less important than other groups or institutions in the shaping of beliefs about particular political issues, in the forming of an ideological orientation toward politics, or in developing ability to participate in political affairs. Also, it appears that for some individuals, or perhaps even for most individuals, the school may gradually assume the major role in political socialization during the elementary grades; and that the school, more than any other factor, may serve to determine an individual's level of political competency.

B. The School and Political Socialization

Public schools in all societies are expected to function as important agents of political socialization by teaching culturally approved political aspirations and roles and stressing love of country and its political institutions. According to V. O. Key, "All national educational systems indoctrinate the oncoming generation with the basic outlooks and values of the political order." (45:316) The schools are also charged with the responsibility of teaching specific political information and skills, such as knowledge about governmental structures and functions and ability to participate in group activities. In a society with democratic aspirations, the ultimate goal of formal political education is the conscious development of characteristics that define the "democratic man."[24]

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[24] See page eighteen for discussion of the "democratic man."

American schools teach political beliefs and behavior both formally and informally, both directly and consciously through planned instruction and inadvertently through casual experiences or chance happenings. Formal courses in history, civics, and government are expected to develop good citizenship. Also, schools observe patriotic holidays and utilize rituals in order to teach respect and love for the nation. The rules of democratic political participation are learned through classroom discussion, committee projects, student government, and school club activities. School teachers and administrators also impart much political learning unconsciously by their styles of behavior, their classroom procedures, and their general attitudes toward children. It is difficult to determine exactly how these school experiences are linked to adult political behavior, but it is probable that they have enormous impact, that they influence some life-long political attitudes.

Much can be learned about the political socialization strategies of American public schools by examining the content of widely used secondary school civics and government textbooks, because textbooks are still the most important instructional materials used in our schools. Recent studies of civics and government textbook content report that the textbooks stress inculcation of "democratic" political beliefs. Considerable space is devoted to prescription of political beliefs that every good "democratic" citizen should have concerning all aspects of group living. They present an optimistic view of American society that glosses over or avoids controversy or criticism about basic features of our political system. Crucial social and political issues relating to such topics as Negro civil rights, crime, juvenile deliquency, birth control, slum clearance, inadequate medical care, hard-core poverty, and drug addiction are either excluded from textbooks or are discussed superficially. The content of civics and government textbooks is highly ethnocentric. The government of the United States is depicted as the world's leading advocate of democracy, morality, and rationality. Alien political systems or ideologies are often shown a priori as inferior or immoral. (63, 79, 82)

Typical textbook discussions of governmental structures and functions concentrate upon legalistic descriptions and ethical prescriptions. They represent ethical-legal norms as actual political behavior, thereby confusing what ought to be with what is. These discussions usually neglect the social foundations of political behavior and the cultural forces that shape political roles and decisions. There is little or no textbook commentary about the relationships between certain kinds of political behavior and socio-economic status, ethnic identity, or secondary group membership. The textbooks have little or nothing to say about basic concepts of political sociology, such as role, status, culture, norms, reference groups, or socialization. (63, 82)

The end-of-chapter questions and suggested activities that appear in all civics and government textbooks emphasize the memorization of facts about government as the key to understanding political affairs. Students are asked to recall or to copy from the textbook such information as the precise legal steps by which a Congressional bill becomes a law, the legal qualifications for becoming President, or the exact wording of the Preamble to the Constitution. Much less attention is devoted to confronting students with issues, with instructing them in methods of reflective thinking and inquiry, with motivating them to use facts effectively to substantiate or to refute political beliefs. (63, 79, 82)

The attitudes and classroom styles of school teachers are important aspects of political socialization in public schools that may tend to reinforce or to undercut the stated objectives of the formal program of political education. For example, a recent study of the political attitudes of public school teachers indicates that many of them are either hostile to or uncertain about many democratic principles. (92) Only twenty-five per cent of elementary teachers and forty-three per cent of secondary teachers responded that police should not have the power to censor books and movies in their cities. Other, similar responses indicated a pattern of authoritarian values and a rejection of certain political ideals of the United States, such as the extension of First Amendment freedoms to social or political nonconformists. (92:477-478)

Many American public school teachers and administrators appear to be unduly preoccupied with maintaining authority over children. For example, George A. W. Stouffer reported that a sample of public school teachers tended to evaluate the behavior of students mainly on the basis of respect for authority and orderly behavior. They tended to be less concerned about withdrawing behavior, because it did not represent a threat to classroom order. (88) Hess and Torney reported that public school teachers which they studied tended to focus upon the importance of authority, obedience to law, and conformity to school regulations and to disregard the importance of active democratic participation. (34:377) On the basis of numerous classroom observations in middle-class urban elementary schools, Jules Henry concluded that the behavior of many teachers appeared to encourage conformity, docility, dependence, and unquestioning obedience. (31) Teachers used inter-group aggression and competitiveness to play-off children against one another in the interest of maintaining a tight grip upon the class. "Thus, in the elementary schools of the middle-class the children get an intensive eight-year-long training in hunting for the right signals in giving the teacher the response wanted." (31:203-204) Edgar Z. Friedenberg concurred that in the interests of maintaining order, enforcing conformity, and wielding authority, many public school teachers and administrators damage or destroy the self-esteem, personal integrity, and individuality of students. (20) Through personal observations in the school, intensive interviews, and a sentence-completion test, Friedenberg studied the attitudes of selected American high school students. He concluded that many students, especially those from lower or working-class families, suffered humiliation, discouragement, and crippled self-concepts, because school systems were geared more toward maintaining authority and exacting obedience than toward building self-esteem and individuality. (20:70-174)

Compared to pre-collegiate students in other societies, Americans do have much more opportunity to participate in classroom discussions and to debate social and political issues. Almond and Verba reported that forty per cent of their sample of adult Americans remembered participating in classroom discussions and debating political and social issues in school. By contrast only sixteen per cent of their British respondents, twelve per cent of the Germans, eleven per cent of the Italians, and fifteen per cent of the Mexicans remembered having had opportunities to participate in classroom discussions and debates. (1:332-334) Nevertheless, under one-half of the American respondents remembered having had freedom to participate in school discussions and debates, which suggests once again that many school teachers have not complied with the official democratic philosophies of education to which virtually all American public school systems publicly subscribe.

The behavioral patterns encouraged by teachers who are preoccupied with maintaining authority are obviously relevant to political socialization. Conformity, docility, and unquestioning obedience in the school can lead to parallel behavior in political situations outside of school. It appears doubtful that typical objectives of formal political education programs, such as development of ability to participate effectively in democratic political affairs or a disposition to honor the worth and dignity of individuals, are served by denigrating student self-esteem in the pursuit of homogenized schoolroom behavior.

The political socialization function of American public schools is complicated by the pluralistic nature of American society. Public schools are charged with the task of helping to develop "good Americans." However, many different views exist about what constitutes a "good American." While most Americans support basic democratic ideals, such as freedom, equality of opportunity, and dignity of the individual, there is often disagreement about specific interpretations of these ideals. For example, the ideal of freedom is interpreted variously by different, but equally loyal Americans, who share positive, supportive feelings about our political system. Some Americans view freedom mainly as a matter of restricting the authority of government to infringe upon certain basic rights of individuals. They consider the role of government to be one of arbitrating disputes, keeping the public order against the threat of anarchy, and protecting private property. By contrast, other Americans see freedom as stemming from extensive intervention of government into the affairs of individuals in order to provide opportunities and rights that these individuals would not enjoy if left to their own unaided efforts. They consider the role of government to be not only that of arbitrating disputes and enforcing laws but also that of administering programs to extend the social and economic opportunities of people.

Public school administrators and teachers are faced with the problem of deciding how to interpret basic American political beliefs as they attempt to socialize children. When there is conflict about specific meanings of basic values, which meaning should the school teach? Public school administrators and teachers often are swayed by community pressures in their efforts to meet this problem. Thus, in some communities certain topics or subjects are either closed to inquiry or are taught in a one-sided manner.

In the Censors and the Schools Jack Nelson and Gene Roberts, Jr. reported the activities of various pressure groups to shape the school curriculum in terms of their biases. They depicted the success of extreme right-wing organizations in excluding from the schools any favorable comment or open-inquiry about the United Nations, socialism, racial integration, or government welfare programs and the influence of civil rights organizations in removing from school libraries those books that they considered insulting to Negroes. (69) On the basis of an extensive study of the teaching of controversial issues in American public schools, John P. Lunstrum concluded, "The social studies still appear to be very much at the mercy of curriculum evangelism and powerful pressure groups." (59:147)

M. Kent Jennings reports that parents are more likely to complain about public school instruction concerning morals, ethics, religion, politics, political ideology, and civil rights than about any other aspect of the content of the formal instructional program. This pattern of parental complaints may stem from the traditional concern of the family in American society with transmitting customary religious and political orientations. (43:26-28) "Instruction in the school -- no matter how oblique -- which threatens to undermine these orientations may be viewed very dimly by parents jealous of this prerogative. Even teaching about presumably objective facts, to say nothing of calling for tolerance of non-conformity or outright pitches for a point of view, may be enough to elicit a grievance. . . ." (43:28) Thus, parental attitudes about politics may limit the scope and style of a school's political education program.

Whatever the limitations or complications of political socialization strategies in American schools, it appears that schools can significantly influence political beliefs and behavior. Numerous studies have indicated a strong, positive relationship between educational attainment and years of schooling and the extent of an individual's political knowledge, toleration of diverse and heterodox political values, and political interest and participation.[25] (56:40) College graduates are more willing than high school graduates to accept fully the implementation of our Bill of Rights. And correspondingly high school graduates more readily support these democratic ideals than do individuals who did not progress beyond elementary school.[26] For example, Samuel Stouffer's nation-wide studies of political opinions showed that sixty-six per cent of college graduates would be willing to allow an opponent of church and religious beliefs to speak openly as opposed to only twenty per cent of those with grade school educations and forty-eight per cent of high school graduates. This response pattern was essentially the same for a great number of items. (89:29-42) The studies of "anti-democratic attitudes" by Remmers and associates, cited previously, indicated a strong connection between acceptance of the Bill of Rights or rejection of racial prejudice and extent of political knowledge, grade level in school, and amount of education completed by parents. (36, 46, 61, 77) Also, the National Opinion Research Center has reported a strong relationship between education, political information, and political activity. College graduates were markedly more well-informed about politics and more willing to participate in political activities than were high school graduates. (21:21) Numerous studies of college students have indicated that seniors are more likely than freshmen to accept political diversity and dissent. For example, a study in 1952 of students in four Ivy League colleges and five public-supported colleges reported a year-by-year increase in the number of students with attitudes that were highly supportive of civil rights. Forty-five per cent of the Ivy League freshmen as compared to sixty-eight per cent of the seniors were highly supportive of civil rights. Thirty-one per cent of the freshmen in public-supported colleges as compared to forty-four per cent of the seniors were highly supportive of civil rights. (3:462) Philip E. Jacob concluded, after an extensive study of the attitudes of college students in the 1950's, that as compared to freshmen, seniors were generally less ethnocentric, more permissive concerning religion and sex, more skeptical of the supernatural, and more critical of the socio-political status quo. (40)

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[25] Seymour M. Lipset says, "If we cannot say that a high level of education is sufficient condition for democracy, the available evidence suggests that it comes close to being a necessary one." (56:40)

[26] A possible explanation for the greater willingness of most college graduates to accept full implementation of American democratic ideals is that they are less likely to feel threatened by certain socio-economic consequences of this implementation. For example, less well-educated working-class people tend to feel threatened by the full extension of equality of opportunity or civil rights to groups lower down on the socio-economic status hierarchy, because they fear that their hard earned and precarious economic gains and social respectability might be menaced by competition from currently less privileged groups. Robert E. Lane's studies of Eastport support this viewpoint. Lane revealed that working-class people tended to fear equality of opportunity and freedom of expression and to partially reject these democratic ideals. (50:26-40, 57-81)

Amount and quality of education appear to be related closely to open-mindedness and flexibility of political beliefs, to readiness to consider or accept new points of view.[27] (60, 70, 76) Indeed, education may be a potent force for the alteration of political values, because through education information is transmitted that may stimulate deviation from family influences or which may provide the groundwork for opinion formation about matters which have not been confronted previously. Through formal education methods of inquiry may be learned that may predispose individuals toward skepticism and criticism of established beliefs that are grounded only upon authority or tradition. If parents have had less education than their children, then education may enable the children to achieve opinions different from parents. Even when parents have had the same amount of formal education as their children, the fact that it was of a "different vintage" means that it has been shaped by the needs and ideas of an earlier period. In this case too, formal education of children helps provide the informational base for deviation from family political values. As Lane and Sears have said, "In one sense children are like the people of traditional societies -- they have the beliefs and prejudices of a single culture, passed on from father to son. Education modifies this. . . . The home and, to some extent, early formal education encapsulate the past; higher education subjects it to scrutiny in the light of different ideas. Thus, if a young person is ready, for whatever reason, to change from the parental model, school, and especially college, facilitate this." (52:25)

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[27] A study by Pressey indicated that college students are more amenable to value change than are high school students. He showed that over the 1923-1943 period societal changes in moral and religious norms had a profound effect on changing values of college students, but did not alter the views of most high school students. (76)

Maccoby studied young adults in Cambridge, Massachusetts and revealed that change from parental political values increases with amount of education. (60)

Theodore H. Newcomb reported, after an intensive study of Bennington College girls, that the "liberal climate of opinion" at Bennington influenced many girls from "conservative," wealthy families to modify their social and political values. (70)

Although most studies have indicated positive relationships between political toleration, open-mindedness, and educational attainment, a note of caution concerning these relationships must be introduced. "Conservative" influences are also part of many college atmospheres. About one out of three students appears to move counter to the "liberal" trend and to develop more "conservative" attitudes while attending college. (16:571) One study in the 1950's even reported that most young adults became more "conservative" while attending college. (3:463) Some social scientists doubt the validity of many attitude studies of college students via questionnaires. They speculate that sophisticated students may learn to subtlely disguise intolerance by giving the expected answers, by becoming "attitude-scale wise." (3:463; 16:567)

The prevailing college climate of opinion appears to have a greater influence upon political behavior and beliefs than formal courses. There is some evidence that college courses in political science do not immediately and directly affect political attitudes. (78) Jacob hypothesized that college communities work with the grain of larger cultural influences and are merely vehicles for communication of new social values. He argued that prior to World War II the attitudes of college students about racial relations were supportive of the status quo, and that only massive efforts by the national government against racial discrimination and segregation (an outside force) induced a change in the attitudes of many college students. (40) The importance of the cultural context and climate of opinion in which education is experienced is also suggested by Karl Bracker's report that one-fourth of the Nazi SS leaders had previously received the doctorate. (48:188)

Having discussed the political socialization function of public schools in American society and the relationship between educational attainment and political attitudes, it is important to discuss the long-term impact of American pre-collegiate education by looking at the political beliefs and behavior of the general adult population. Important objectives of the High school curriculum are teaching information about government and political behavior, transmitting an enthusiasm for political participation, and instilling acceptance of basic democratic ideals. Since a large majority of American adults have attended secondary school, and most have graduated, the long-term impact of the political education program can be measured roughly, in terms of the objectives of instruction mentioned above, through surveys of adult political attitudes.

The schools stress teaching, even memorization, of vast amounts of political information. Keeping abreast of public affairs is emphasized as an important characteristic of a good democratic citizen. What is judicial review? What is an open primary election? How can amendments be made to the constitution? Who is the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court? Questions such as these are typically asked in secondary school civics and government courses. However, numerous surveys have documented the political ignorance of the American public, testifying that our formal political education programs have failed to impart a lasting knowledge of governmental functions or a disposition to keep abreast of public affairs. For example, in 1945 eighty-five per cent of an American Institute of Public Opinion sample could identify the ventriloquist's dummy, Charlie McCarthy, but only fifty-one per cent had ever heard of James F. Byrnes, then Secretary of State. (21: 13) Other typical responses reported by the AIPO during the period 1947-1961 were as follows: in 1947 forty-six per cent of a national sample correctly defined the term "tariff"; in 1949 fifty-four per cent were aware of the political significance of a filibuster; in 1951 forty-two per cent could identify the rights guaranteed by the Fifth Amendment; in 1961 thirteen per cent had heard of the European Common Market. (18) During the 1948 Presidential campaign, twelve out of every 100 adult Americans were unaware that Thomas E. Dewey was the Republican candidate and nine out of every 100 did not know President Harry S. Truman was seeking re-election. During the 1948 Presidential election between sixty to seventy per cent of the adult population were completely ignorant of the major political party platforms. (38) In 1960 the Gallup Poll sought to find out public knowledge about the electoral college. Presumably, as public school pupils, most Americans had read about the electoral college and perhaps were even required to memorize the important details about how it functions. Yet only thirty-two per cent of the Gallup Poll sample were able to give some explanation of this institution. (21:14)

The schools persistently emphasize the importance of political participation. Children are taught that good citizens must vote, that they must take part in political party affairs, that they must be watchdogs over the commonweal if democracy is to survive. Yet strong evidence exists that very few American adults have heeded these exhortations. Data collected by Julian Woodward and Elmo Roper in 1950 showed that 10.3 per cent of the adult population could be described as "very active" politically, and that 38.3 per cent were "very inactive." (94:874) These percentages were based upon minimal participation in political activities, such as voting, discussing politics, speaking or writing to public officials, belonging to organizations that engage in public political activity, taking part in elections, and donating money to political campaigns. Public participation in politics does not appear to have increased in the decade following the Woodward-Roper survey. Popular participation in the national election campaigns of 1952 and 1956 was very low. Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes report that only a little more than one-fourth of their sample even bothered to ". . . talk to any people and try to show them why they should vote for one of the parties or candidates." Other responses about popular participation in the national political campaigns of 1952 and 1956 were as follows: two per cent in 1952 and three per cent in 1956 reported membership in a political club or organization; four per cent in 1952 and ten per cent in 1956 reported contributing money to a party or candidate; seven per cent in both 1952 and 1956 reported attending a political meeting, rally, or dinner. (4:91) In 1961 the Gallup Poll found that only nine per cent of their sample had written to a U. S. Congressman or Senator during the previous year. (21:11) Numerous Americans do not even perform the basic and relatively undemanding act of voting. Less than two-thirds of the adult population typically votes in a Presidential election. Less than one-half of the adult population typically votes in the off-year congressional elections.

The schools attempt to instill acceptance of basic democratic ideals, such as freedom, equality of opportunity, and the dignity of man. However, large numbers of the adult population do not accept certain ramifications of these basic democratic ideals. For example, a comparison of popular opinion about basic democratic ideals in Ann Arbor, Michigan and Tallahassee, Florida, two university towns, revealed that between ninety-five and ninety-eight per cent of the registered voters in these towns agreed with general statements, such as: "Democracy is the best form of government;" "Every citizen should have an equal chance to influence government policy;" "People in the minority should be free to try to win majority support for their opinions." But many of the same people who showed support for these general principles were not always willing to implement these principles. Thus, seventy-nine per cent of these people agreed that only taxpayers should be allowed to vote in a city referendum to decide the merits of a tax supported project. The right to give an anti-religious speech was rejected by about one-third of the respondents. About two-fifths of the southern respondents and one-fifth of the northern respondents agreed to the statement, "A Negro should not be allowed to run for mayor in this city." (21:8) A recent Harris opinion survey reported that many adult Americans believed that certain types of political and social non-conformists are "harmful to American life." A majority of the Harris sample expressed intolerance of "young men with beards and long hair," "college professors active in unpopular causes." "student demonstrators at colleges," "civil rights demonstrators," "anti-Vietnam war pickets," and "people who don't believe in God." Harris concluded, ". . . no matter how these results are weighed or analyzed, it is apparent that American beliefs in the right to be different are not nearly as firm as some had claimed or as they once were." (28)

The schools do appear to contribute to the developing of long-term positive, supportive political beliefs and to the under-cutting of political alienation and cynicism. The vast majority of American adults express a generalized loyalty to the American political system and a generalized acceptance of American political ideals. Many American adults indicate some political alienation or cynicism, but compared to most other peoples around the world their political attitudes appear quite positive and supportive. Compared to their parents, most American youth, even high school seniors, are considerably less cynical about politics. (41:14) This comparatively positive political outlook of Americans might be somewhat attributed to the extensive efforts which the schools make to glorify the American political system. However, the glorified and optimistic view of the American political system presented by textbooks may be somewhat dysfunctional. It may lead to an increase in political cynicism among young adults as they experience the realities of adult political behavior that may appear sordid and shocking when compared to the purified textbook and classroom versions of politics.

Typical textbooks and teachers prescribe some political conduct that may also be dysfunctional in the real political world. For example, the usual emphasis upon high rates of political activity and independent voting as unquestioned virtues may be misleading. It is possible for a democratically oriented political system to function adequately despite considerable political apathy. Low voting turnout and relatively low levels of public political activity could reflect general popular satisfaction with the status quo and low salience of political affairs for large numbers of people. However, high voter turnout accompanied by frenzied mass political activity could be a threat to stable constitutional government. High voter turnout could be a symptom of breakdown in consensus or serious governmental inadequacy. Extensive, continuous politicization could magnify conflict and reduce compromise and gradual solutions to political problems. High rates of popular political activity in the United States would mean politicization of individuals with relative propensity to espouse authoritarian attitudes, political cynicism, and political intolerance, to prefer strong leaders, to feel inadequate and insecure, and to lack political knowledge. Certainly, these characteristics of American "non-voters" are inimical to democratic ideals identified with the American political system.[28] Social and political disorder followed by an autocratic reorientation of the political system could result from extensive politicization of the typical American "non-voter."[29] (56:226-229)

A high rate of voting is not necessarily inimical to the stability of a democratic political system. Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, and the Scandinavian countries regularly have had higher voter turnouts than has the United States without a decline in constitutional government. Extensive political participation by almost all elements of the American public would probably constitute no threat to democratic ideals, political stability, or constitutional government if the quality of participation reflected a sound understanding of the American political system. Thus, Seymour M. Lipset has said, "To the extent that the lower strata have been brought into electoral process gradually (through increased organization, and upgrading of the educational system, and a growth in their understanding of the relevance of government action to their interest) increased participation is undoubtedly a good thing for democracy. It is only when a major crisis or an effective authoritarian movement suddenly pulls the normally disaffected habitual non-voters into the political arena that the system is threatened." (56:229)

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[28] Many of the characteristics that distinguish non-voters from voters are by-products of low socio-economic status and low educational attainment. See Part III-C for a discussion of the relationship between low socio-economic status and political beliefs and behavior.

[29] Herbert Tingsten has pointed to the very high voter turnouts in Germany and Austria, in the 1930's, prior to the disintegration of constitutional government in these countries. (56:227)

Independent voters in America are also not necessarily paragons of democratic virtue, as textbooks often suggest. Independent voters -- those individuals who do not identify with any political party -- are less informed about politics, less concerned about the outcomes of elections, and less willing to participate in politics than are political party partisans. For example, Campbell and associates found that forty-nine per cent of their sample, identified as independents, were not very concerned with the outcomes of the 1956 national elctions. By contrast only eighteen per cent of those individuals with "strong party identification" expressed lack of concern about the election results. Further, this study suggested that political party partisans are more likely to be politically competent than are independents. The tendency of political independents to be uninvolved in numerous voluntary group organizations also has important political implications. (4:143) Kornhauser has concluded, on the basis of reviewing numerous cross-cultural studies, that social and political isolation makes an individual vulnerable to extremist and authoritarian political appeals.[30] (48)

Controversy persists about the relative importance of the American public school as an agent of political socialization. Social scientists agree that the school plays a major political socialization role. As David Easton has said, "In our society at any rate, schools get the child from at least the age of five and hold him with certain differences for class origins and state legislation until fifteen or sixteen. In that period the schools occupy an increasing portion of the child's and adolescent's day. If for no other reason than that the time at the disposal of educational institutions at this impressionable stage of development is so great, we might expect the impact of political orientations to be of equivalent force." (15:314) Hess and Torney have even hypothesized that the school ". . . is apparently the most powerful institution in the socialization of attitudes, conceptions and beliefs about the operation of the political system." (34:377) However, the relative importance and the extent of the school's impact upon the political values of children is an unsettled question.

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[30] See Part III-C for further discussion of this point.

Research indicates a strong, positive relationship between educational attainment and toleration for political and social non-conformity, political interest and participation, and a high level of political information. But the extent to which formal instruction contributes to tolerance of non-conformity and to high levels of political interest and participation is uncertain. Most political socialization research has not indicated a direct connection between formal instruction about politics and the formation of political attitudes. For example, Horton's studies of high school youth led to the conclusion that formal courses in civics and government have no effect in shaping favorable attitudes toward the Bill of Rights. (36:56) Schick and Somit found that college courses in political science did not increase political interest or participation. (78) Almond and Verba reported a moderate relationship between classroom experiences and political attitudes. Adults who remembered that they could and did participate frequently in classroom discussions had a higher sense of political efficacy than those who recalled that they did not have such classroom opportunities. However, individuals who remembered that they had opportunities to participate in classroom discussions, but that they did not use these opportunities, tended to have even less sense of political efficacy than those who had no such opportunities. This finding suggests that other factors, perhaps the impact of the home and socio-economic status upon self-esteem, were often more important than classroom atmosphere in the formation of political attitudes. (1:352-360) Almond and Verba also suggested a relationship between the content of teaching and an individual's feelings of political competence. Those individuals in their sample, from the United States, Britain, and Mexico, who could remember being taught about politics in school tended to report a high sense of political competence. Respondents from Germany and Italy, who attended school during the period of autocratic Nazi and Fascist rule, did not reveal a connection between instruction about politics and a sense of political efficacy. On the basis of these findings Almond and Verba hypothesized that the autocratic philosophy of education and teaching content that permeated the schools of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy were responsible for the lack of relationship between the recall of political instruction and a sense of political efficacy on the part of their German and Italian respondents. However, this hypothesis about the link between the content of political instruction and a heightened sense of political competence is based upon limited data and is very tenuous. (1:361-363)

In the absence of research that indicates a strong direct relationship between formal instruction about politics and the formation of political attitudes, most social scientists have accepted the hypothesis that the school's impact upon political values emanates mainly from its prevailing climate of opinion and educational atmosphere, rather than from its program of formal studies. This conclusion does not necessarily mean that formal political education programs in secondary schools can only reinforce attitudes instilled by other agents of political socialization. The lack of impact that formal political instruction appears to have had upon the formation of political attitudes could derive mainly from inadequate methods of teaching and course content. It is also possible that formal political education programs that require individuals to critically examine their political ideas could lead to a long-run modification of political beliefs. Perhaps germinal political ideas implanted during adolescence might flower during adulthood -- especially if these ideas were reinforced by later experiences. However, at present there is very little evidence to support this speculation due to lack of longitudinal studies of political beliefs.

The qualitatively different educational climate of the typical American college or university may also be a significant factor in explaining why the strong positive relationship between exposure to higher education and political tolerance, interest, and participation does not extend to those who have not been educated formally beyond high school. Compared with most high schools, the typical college community is much less subject to public pressures and constraints. It is more heterogeneous in population and cosmopolitan in outlook. It is more conducive to inquiry and open-mindedness. Perhaps the characteristics of academic freedom and cosmopolitan outlook contribute extensively to the fostering of political interest and participation and "democratic" political attitudes. Perhaps high school political education programs would have a greater influence upon the formation of "democratic" attitudes if they were conducted in an atmosphere more conducive to inquiry and open-mindedness.

C. The Impact of Socio-Economic Status, Sex Identity, Youth Groups, and Mass Communications Media Upon Political Beliefs and Behavior

The political beliefs and behavior of young Americans vary considerably according to socio-economic status. In any society people can be differentiated according to social position. On the basis of factors, such as wealth, occupation, educational attainment, place of residence, and membership in social and civic organizations, people see themselves, and are seen by others, to have more or less status than others, to have a higher or lower social position relative to other individuals. A family's social position greatly affects political socialization by governing the ways in which culture is transmitted to children.

Child-rearing practices, school experiences, and peer group relationships are likely to vary considerably according to socio-economic status. At home and school, middle and upper-class children tend to have ample opportunity to assert themselves constructively, to express feelings and ideas, to acquire intellectual and social skills necessary for leadership, to gain the confidence and poise essential to effective political action. Middle-class parent-child relationships usually tend to be equalitarian. When disciplining their children, middle-class parents usually rely upon reason, appeals to guilt, isolation, or threats to withdraw love rather than upon physical punishment. Middle-class parents tend to tolerate their children's expressed impulses and desires and to expect their children to assume certain responsibilities around the home at an early age and to do well in school. Upper and middle-class child-rearing patterns foster positive attitudes about political participation and about political efficacy. (2:54; 65:80-89, 152-158)

By contrast, lower or working-class children are often inhibited by over-strict authority patterns at home and at school, by psychic and economic insecurity, and by lack of opportunity for an adequate formal education. Working-class parent-child relationships revolve around parental efforts to enforce order and obedience. Physical punishment and ridicule are the usual disciplinary methods. Hostility, aggressiveness, tension, and severity tend to prevail in the child-parent relationships in working or lower-class homes. (2:54; 65:80-89, 152-158) Thus, Robert E. Lane has said, "Child-rearing practices in the lower-status group tend to provide a less adequate personality basis for appropriately self-assertive social participation." (51:234)

The major limitations of political education programs in schools with mostly higher-status children are magnified in the schools that serve the lower classes. Curriculum content experienced by the lower-status child is geared toward the simple and direct indoctrination of the cliches of Americanism and the prescription of idealistic virtues as viewed from middle-class perspectives. A strong effort is made to infuse these marginal children with the moral precepts of our society's middle-class elements. Political education programs are devoid of information about the realities of government functions or political behavior and are scarcely relevant to the needs of underprivileged youth. Lower-status children are not given an understanding of how the political system can help them to achieve desired socio-economic objectives. Usually, the educational climate is authoritarian in schools with predominately lower-status children. Such children are not encouraged to readily or freely express their own opinions, to participate in decision-making activities, to assume important responsibilities at school, or to think critically or divergently. (20, 57)

The usual, politically relevant consequences of lower-status child-rearing patterns are diminished self-esteem, authoritarian orientations to authority, reduced control of hostile impulses, increased anxiety and tension, and alienation from public political institutions. Thus, lower-status individuals tend to believe that they cannot successfully influence political decisions, to feel incompetent to assume leadership, to defer passively to established authority, to unthinkingly accept the domination of others, to feel inadequate to cope with social forces that appear overwhelming, and to adopt an apathetic, fatalistic attitude toward life. (22:94-106) Higher rates of homicide, crimes of assault, and wife-beating, associated with the lower social levels, are also politically relevant reflections of lower-status child-rearing patterns. (65:152)

Authoritarianism, closed-mindedness, and intolerance of social and political non-conformity or ethnic diversity increase with decreasing socio-economic status. For example, Stouffer found that sixty-six per cent of a sample of individuals classified as professionals or semi-professionals expressed tolerance with respect to civil liberties issues as compared to thirty per cent of a sample of manual workers and twenty per cent of a group of farm workers. (89:139) Robert E. Lane concluded from his Eastport study that, in American society, the professional classes were the staunchist defenders of the ideals of freedom and equality for all men. By contrast, working-class people tended to fear equality of opportunity and freedom of expression and to partially reject these democratic ideals. (50:26-40, 57-81) Harris reported recently that sixty-four per cent of the individuals in his sample earning less that $5,000 per year were intolerant of non-conformist social or political behavior as compared to forty-six per cent of those earning over $10,000 per year. (28) Roy E. Horton's studies of American secondary school students indicated that pupils who tended to espouse "Anti-democratic" political attitudes came from families with lower income and educational levels. (36:56-58) These findings appear to belie the Marxist's notion that workers are natural repositories of "liberal" socio-political sentiments.

Although lower-status individuals tend to oppose "liberal" attitudes about civil liberties, they favor "liberal" economic reform and social welfare programs. At higher socio-economic levels economic "liberalism" decreases and civil liberties "liberalism" increases. Since the Democratic Party has supported "liberal" economic reforms more often than the Republicans, most lower-status Americans tend to favor the Democrats, and most upper-status Americans tend to favor the Republicans. (45:121-181) This relationship is affected, however, by the prevailing opportunities for social mobility. Seymour M. Lipset has hypothesized that, "The more open the status-linked social relations of a given society, the more likely well-paid workers are to become conservatives politically. . . . In a more closed society, the upper level of the workers will feel deprived and hence support left-wing parties." (56:254)

Political interest and involvement declines with decreasing socio-economic status. Hyman reported that eighty-six per cent of a sample of children from upper-income families followed the Presidential election of 1952, as compared to fifty-eight per cent of the children from families with low incomes. (37:35) Differences in political interest and involvement according to socio-economic status are noticeable during the early school years and grow as the child matures. Woodward and Roper found that most upper socio-economic status individuals, such as executives, professionals, stockholders, college graduates, rated "very active" on their index of political participation. Most lower socio-economic status people, such as laborers, Negroes, and those with only grade school education, were rated "very inactive" politically. (94:877)

Lower-status people, who do not participate in political affairs, are usually uninvolved in volunatry organizations and general community activities. They tend to be social isolates. William Kornhauser has attempted to assess the political implications of this social isolation. (48) He reports that people with few social links to the community are less prone to community or self control. They lack exposure to information on which to base sound judgments, practice in habits of democratic discussion, debate, and compromise, and understanding of the importance of guarding civil liberties. Although social isolates are unlikely to be involved in community controversy, they tend to be immoderate, irrational, and unsophisticated when mobilized to public participation. They are especially receptive to extremist appeals that reduce public controversy to simple either/or terms. For example, workers in relatively isolated jobs -- occupations associated with one-industry towns or areas -- such as fishermen, miners, maritime workers, or forestry workers, show higher rates of support for communism than workers more in touch with social cross-currents. Unskilled workers or the unemployed are usually isolated from the larger community and are susceptible to extremist appeals that promise clear-cut solutions to their problems. Thus, Kornhauser has hypothesized that lower socio-economic status people are more receptive to extremist appeals than are upper socio-economic status people. However, ". . . it is the more isolated members of all social classes who gravitate toward mass movements. People who have few social ties to the existing order are available for political adventures against that order. The individual's vulnerability is not determined by economic interests alone; the crucial question is whether the individual has attachments to occupation, association, and community. The reality of democratic affiliations either impinges upon him through these affiliations or not in any firm way." (48:220-221)

The political socialization process also varies significantly according to sex identity. In American culture boys are expected to be more aggressive, competitive and active than females. Politics is normally thought to be men's business, and men are expected to be more interested, informed, and active in political affairs than are women. Normally, American women are expected to be passive, non-aggressive, apolitical followers of male political leadership.

At home and school these distinct male and female political roles are inculcated. Thus, even at the fourth-grade level boys are more politically informed than girls, and they tend to show more interest in learning about politics in social studies courses. Also, both boys and girls say that they are more likely to choose the father rather than the mother as an appropriate source of advice about voting. (22:115-118)

Politically relevant role distinctions between males and females continue into adulthood. Generally, American men are more likely to participate in political affairs than women. This includes the acts of voting and communicating with elected representatives. Numerous studies over a fifty-year period have thoroughly documented the political passivity of American women -- that they are less informed, less interested, and less active politically than males.[31] (22:109-188) Females tend to have less of a sense of political efficacy than males. Campbell and associates reported that in 1952 thirty-five per cent of the males in their sample felt very efficacious as compared to twenty per cent of the females. (5:191) And when females do show political interest, it is more likely to be about local community affairs rather than about national or international politics. Females also tend to be candidate-oriented in elections, to personalize political issues, and to favor public office-seekers and policies oriented toward conservative moral principles. (51:213)

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[31] Further evidence of the inferior role ascribed to women in American political culture is that as recently as 1963, fifty-five per cent of a national sample said that they would not vote for a woman Presidential candidate. (22:111)

Recent evidence suggests that male-female differences in political participation are lessening. The usual gap between male and female voting turn-out in national elections has narrowed to around ten per cent. In some suburban communities with predominately upper socio-economic status populations there is virtually no sex differential in voting rates. (51: 210-211) In 1952 Campbell and associates also found almost no difference between males and females as to "sense of civic duty." Forty-four per cent of their sample of males felt a high "sense of citizen's duty" as compared to forty-two per cent of the females. (5:197)

Although the home and school dominate the political socialization of American children, a number of other forces have an ancillary role in molding political beliefs and behavior. Prominent among these secondary forces are the possible influence of youth groups or mass communications media. Friendship and youth organizations tend to exert an increasing influence as the child matures. Discussion of politics with friends increases considerably during the high school years, although the frequency of political discussion with parents also increases. (37:101) But if friendship groups stress values which conflict with parental views, there exists the possibility for deviation from family values. This is especially so when a child is resentful of parental control. In such cases, friendship groups usually exert more influence than parents. Young people also tend to be more responsive to peer group control than to parental influences concerning attitudes that are of great immediate personal importance. Since political affairs are relatively less salient for most young people than many other matters, they tend either to accept parental political attitudes or to be indifferent to them. However, for those who seek alternatives to family political values, friendship groups may exert a strong socialization influence. (52:27)

Youth organizations do not play the highly partisan political role in the United States that they play in some other nations. In West Germany and France church youth groups, labor union youth clubs, and socialist youth organizations have a strong influence in shaping particular partisan values. Since children are typically enrolled into these groups by parents, they do serve to reinforce family beliefs. In the United States, the common youth organizations tend to reinforce broad norms of the political culture; but, in contrast to German and French youth clubs, they tend to be apolitical insofar as making overt partisan efforts to propagandize or proselytize in favor of a particular political party. For example, American Boy Scout groups may attempt to instill certain patriotic virtues, Christian morals, and democratic procedures, but they sedulously avoid political party partisanship. (8, 68:166-167) Most youth organizations in American society serve to buttress the socio-political status quo. "In short, the members of all these organizations learn what is expected of them as ideal American citizens. By the bye, they may also learn many unintended facts, but the leaders do their best not to teach them contrary notions." (68:167)

Those who have feared the imminence of a "Big Brother" controlled society, or who have shuddered at the prospects of a "Power Elite" with the potential to control thought through monopoly of mass communications media should be relieved at the findings of researchers about the impact of American mass media in the formation of values. The mass media usually do not appear to directly affect the values of Americans. Rather, their influence is normally mediated by primary and secondary groups. These group mediators selectively interpret the mass media communications for individuals, and this mediating interpretation serves to reinforce values already sanctioned by family, friends, and voluntary organizations. Strong attachment to a group disposes individuals to allow group norms to determine their responses to communications. (47, 51:289-294)

Political information transmitted through the mass media is most likely to influence individuals if they perceive it to be useful in solving pressing problems, in gaining the approval of respected individuals or reference groups, or in relieving psychic tension. (51:294-298) In addition, the mass media seem to have potency for opinion formation among social isolates or about issues that are fresh and for which there is no ready frame of reference within the culture. When the mediating factors are for some reason inoperative or in favor of change, the mass media may also directly influence value formation. The attitudes of people affected by cross-pressures tend to be unstable and are particularly susceptible to conversion. But as Joseph Klapper has stressed, "Mass communication ordinarily does not serve as a necessary and sufficient cause of audience effects, but rather functions among and through a nexus of mediating factors and influences." (47:457)

The mass media tend to influence politicization. Exposure to the mass media is related to increased political interest and participation. And politicized individuals show a propensity to seek information communicated by the mass media. However, in some ways the mass media appear to discourage political action. They may distract individuals from serious political concerns with "diversionary content," such as comics, sports pages, and women's pages. They may treat certain crucial social problems superficially and thereby weaken interest in these problems. They often fail to win the confidence of certain groups. For example, working-class people tend to lack confidence in the press. Democrats generally share this lack of confidence as contrasted to Republicans. Overall, however, exposure to the mass media is related to increased interest in politics, higher rates of voting, membership in community organizations, higher levels of political information, stronger views about political issues, stronger candidate preferences, and closer adherence to a political party position. (51:281-289)

IV. HOW IMPORTANT IS EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING IN THE FORMATION OF POLITICAL BELIEFS?

Uncertainty prevails about the exact impact of early childhood learning upon adult political beliefs and behavior. Greenstein, Easton, and Hess place great stress upon the strength of early learning. Greenstein has said that early childhood learning is highly resistent to change, and that later learning is more susceptible to change. He has attributed the strength of early learning to the immature child's uncritical approach to learning, to his tendency to learn through identification and imitation, and to his relatively plastic personality structure. "Social and political learning which takes place at this point can become a part of the individual's basic psychic equipment." (22:81) Early learning has a crucial effect upon later learning; it conditions the individual's attitudes toward politics throughout his adult life. (22:79-84)

Easton and Hess share Greenstein's viewpoint about the acute importance of early childhood learning in shaping adult political beliefs and behavior. They have hypothesized that the period between ages three and thirteen is the crucial time for political socialization. ". . . it is apparent that the elementary-school years rather than the high school years present the crucial time for training in citizenship attitudes and the wider range of behavior we have called political socialization." (33:264) This hypothesis was based upon comparative studies of high school and elementary school pupils. The studies led to the conclusion that little change in "basic political orientations to regime and community" took place during the four years of high school. Easton and Hess acknowledged that most individuals increased their store of information about government and political behavior during the four high school years. However, they found little evidence that fundamental, political attitudes and values concerning the regime and political community were modified during later adolescence. (14:33) "While there was evidence of some change during the high-school years, the magnitude of accumulated attitudes apparent in the freshmen classes indicated that the process of political socialization had been underway for some time and was nearing completion." (33:258-259)

Cohen, Almond, Verba, and Jennings have also agreed that early childhood learning is very important to personality development, that it may be very resistant to change, that it influences later learning, and that it is likely to have a strong impact upon adult political beliefs and behavior. However, they have contended that some basic political values may be subject to modification during adolescence and adulthood. Cohen has said that social and political values learned during early childhood are unlikely to change if beliefs learned at home are consistently reinforced outside the home. This situation prevails in simple, static, primitive, and/or agricultural societies, where the family has a continuing and nearly exclusive access to control over the individual's behavior, and where there is an obvious and direct relationship between values learned at home and behavior in the larger adult community. However, Cohen has argued that in an industrialized, urbanized, dynamic society much learning takes place outside the home. The family no longer has a nearly exclusive control over socialization, and much away-from-home learning does not reinforce traditional family values. Rather it may create cross-pressures that preclude any deeply rooted commitment to a traditional, unitary, closed belief system. Traditional family values may be dysfunctional in a rapidly changing society that is continually being altered by unanticipated events. Socio-economic forces in a dynamic society tend to encourage physical and social mobility, which move individuals away from the constraining influences of their childhood homes and which motivate aspirations that deviate from traditional family values. For example, children who aspire to move up the socio-economic status hierarchy repudiate the values of lower-class parents, and many second generation children of immigrant parents reject their traditional family values. In modern American society children tend to grow away from parental influences as they mature, because they are influenced by fresh contacts outside the home in a rapidly changing culture. (7:106-112) Thus, Cohen has hypothesized that in the United States, or in any other modern industrialized society, much childhood socialization is subject to fundamental modification, because it takes place outside the home. ". . . those things which are learned outside the home are much more susceptible to change than those which are learned from parents at home." (7:111-112)

Almond and Verba have contended that in a modern, pluralistic, industrialized society roles learned within the family do not directly transfer to successful participation within the larger society and that away-from-home socialization can modify or supplant early childhood learning. They have focused upon adolescence and young adulthood as important periods of political socialization, because at these times participation in school activities, voluntary organizations, and job activities is more relevant to political concerns than is early childhood socialization in the family or school. Their cross-cultural studies revealed that adults who remembered having had opportunities to participate in discussions and decision-making at home, at school, and at work were more likely to have a sense of political efficacy than adults who recalled no such participatory opportunities. However, this relationship was strongest among respondents with low educational attainment. Individuals with higher education attainment tended to express a sense of political competence that was independent of recalled opportunities to participate in discussions and decision-making at home or school. Thus, Almond and Verba suggested that exposure to higher education may compensate for lack of family and school participatory experiences during early childhood, because it may develop participatory skills and inculcate participatory norms. For example, college-educated individuals are often induced to show interest and efficacy in political affairs by various social pressures and expectations. Almond and Verba also found that there was a strong positive relationship between opportunities to participate in decision-making at one's place of work and one's sense of political efficacy. On the basis of these cross-cultural findings, they concluded that participatory experiences closer in time and form to the operation of a society's political system may tend to outweigh the impact of early childhood political socialization concerning attitudes about political interest, involvement, and competency. "Family experiences do play a role in the formation of political attitudes, but the role may not be central; the gap between the family and the polity may be so wide that other social experiences, especially in social situations closer in time and in structure to the political system, may play a larger role." (1:373) Almond and Verba argued that the authority patterns experienced by adolescents and adults in voluntary organizations, in school, and in places of work were crucial to the political socialization process and may modify early learning, because they tend to be more similar to authority patterns in the political system than are family authority patterns. Therefore, despite the influence that early childhood learning may have upon adult political behavior through its impact upon the formation of basic personality characteristics, numerous other factors may intervene between early childhood socialization and later political behavior that may restrict or even replace early learning. (1:323-373)

Jennings also accepts the importance of early childhood socialization. He has agreed with Greenstein, Easton, and Hess that certain basic political values, such as general loyalty toward country and government, stem mainly from early childhood learning at home and school. However, he has hypothesized that many important political attitudes are prone to fluctuate considerably, that post-childhood socialization and resocialization are very significant in the formation of certain kinds of political orientations and beliefs. This conclusion was based upon comparative studies of high school seniors and their parents that suggested a minimal family influence upon value formation concerning particular issues, groups, and levels of government. Jennings found either weak or virtually no positive correlation between the attitudes of twelfth-grade students and their parents concerning certain abstract issues pertaining to freedom and equal rights, affect for particular ethnic, religious, or economic groups, and orientations toward multiple levels of government. Jennings suggested that these divergencies may be explained by generational differences, life-cycle effects, or some combination of these two factors. Generational differences result from discrepancies in pre-adult socialization of parents and their children. In response to changing social conditions parents may consciously raise their children much differently than they were raised, or the transmission of parental values to children may be undermined by socialization agencies outside the home that reflect cultural forces contrary to family traditions. Life-cycle effects refer to the impact of post-adolescent socialization in modifying or replacing earlier attitudes. Adults may be subject to various social pressures relating to particular socio-economic conditions and to aspirations that can alter values acquired during childhood or adolescence. (41, 42, 44)

Additional evidence in support of the hypothesis that the adolescent and post-adolescent periods can be important times for the shaping of political values has been provided by Theodore M. Newcomb and Robert E. Mainer.[32] Newcomb's study of the change of political values of Bennington College girls, attributed to being immersed in a very liberal "climate of opinion" offers a solid argument in support of the idea that the shaping of some basic political beliefs continues beyond age thirteen. Most of the girls which Newcomb studied in the late 1930's came from wealthy, conservative, Republican families. After four years of exposure to Bennington, most of these girls acquired more liberal viewpoints. A follow-up study by Newcomb in the 1960's showed that for the most part the girls retained their liberal views. (70) Further, Robert E. Mainer has reported the effectiveness of "intergroup education programs" in altering socio-political beliefs of high school pupils. These "intergroup education programs" consisted of depth studies about minority groups in American culture, alien cultures, and world religions. After a five-month exposure to intensive "intergroup education," high school youth became more opposed to social discrimination against racial or ethnic minorities and more supportive of ideals and practices aimed at easing the social difficulties of minority groups. The greatest attitude changes occurred among twelfth-graders. (61:144-154) Thus, Mainer hypothesized that, ". . . intergroup programs capitalize upon the dramatic changes in attitudes that occur in the youth of our society in late adolescence and early adulthood. A program which attacks undesired attitudes and offers new ones to replace them appears to be most effective when traditional ideologies are under evaluation and change." (61:146-147)

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[32] See Part III-B for discussion of the relationship between higher education and political values.

Questions about the impact of early learning upon adult political beliefs and behavior and about when the most important period of political socialization occurs remain unsettled, despite the persuasive Easton-Hess studies that have suggested that the period from ages three to thirteen is the optimum time for political socialization. Social scientists agree that early learning is very important in the shaping of personality characteristics that continue to influence political beliefs and behavior throughout adulthood. The pre-adolescent period does seem to be the time when some basic orientations to the political system are developed, and these orientations may be highly resistant to change. However, evidence exists that indicates the importance of post-childhood socialization in building upon, or even modifying, earlier political orientations. Attitudes about political efficacy, multiple levels of government, socio-economic groups, and certain political issues appear to fluctuate considerably, to be subject to post-childhood socialization or resocialization. Conclusive evidence has not been marshalled to rule out the importance of adolescence and young adulthood as key periods for forming some basic political values.

V. CONCLUSION

The recent findings of political socialization research have added considerably to our knowledge of the content of the political beliefs of young Americans, and they have provided the grounds for reasonable speculation about the process by which these beliefs are acquired. These findings appear to have some important implications for political education programs in secondary schools. Some of these implications have been mentioned or alluded to in several parts of this essay. Indeed, a main criterion for selection of studies to be reviewed was the extent to which they appeared to be related to the concerns of secondary school political education. However, as Greenstein has noted, ". . . there are . . . rather knotty problems in moving from the findings in a body of empirical research to their implications for practical programs." (23:1) Prominent among these "knotty problems" are the difficulties involved in establishing relationships between studies with similar concerns but with divergent research designs that reflect dissimilar techniques and unequal quality, in making generalizations that cut-across these qualitatively different studies, in sorting out discrepancies and conflicting conclusions, and in resisting tendencies to over-value findings that agree with preconceived notions and ideological preferences. Acknowledgement of these difficulties should serve as a reminder that many present conclusions in the field of political socialization are very tenuous.

In and of themselves, the findings of political socialization research do not prescribe new and improved political education programs for secondary schools. But they point to some crucial educational problems; they help to narrow the range of possible alternatives to these problems; and they raise some very basic questions about past practices and future possibilities in political education.

Perhaps the most acute educational problem reflected by political socialization research is the proclivity of our schools to approach the task of political socialization in a one-sided manner, especially in schools serving mainly lower or working-class children. The schools reinforce and develop strong positive, supportive attitudes toward state and nation. Most American children learn well the lessons of conforming to the socio-political status quo. Certainly the schools may contribute substantially to national strength and stability when they impart supportive political orientations. As Friedenberg has asserted, "The most important social process taking place in our schools is learning to be an American. . . . For us conformity is a moral mandate." (20:92) These tendencies in American society toward maintaining socio political orthodoxy and enforcing mass conformity were noted over a century ago by Alexis de Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill, who thought that these tendencies were powerful enough to merit the pejorative label, "tyranny of the majority." (67, 90) Current research merely substantiates and deepens our understanding of this long-standing phenomenon.

However, certain consequences may flow from overemphasis upon conformity that are inconsistent with many of the professed objectives of American public schools and with certain democratic ideals. For example, overemphasis upon conformity appears to be associated with authoritarian school atmospheres where docile children are prized above active, deeply probing thinkers; where strict adherence to authoritative pronouncements is preferred over student inquiry into pressing, socio-political concerns; where strict obedience to rules is stressed to the exclusion of inquiry into the need for rules. This may contribute to some unanticipated and undesired consequences for adult political behavior such as alienation or cynicism, dispositions to passively accept authority, and tendencies to be intolerant of reasonable political dissent or non-conformity. Certainly social forces other than the school may contribute to these types of political behavior, such as the present quality of life in lower-class homes and neighborhoods. But since the school's climate of opinion and educational atmosphere appear to be more influential in shaping political attitudes than does its formal programs of instruction, it is possible that an authoritarian school environment may subvert textbook and teacher prescriptions of democratic political values and that it may contribute to the hardening of political beliefs and to a closed-minded resistance toward alternative or unorthodox points of view.[33]

Edgar Z. Friedenberg and Margaret Mead have attributed this one-sided approach to political socialization of many American schools in part to their past function of assimilating waves of southern and eastern European immigrants to the American way. The schools attempted to produce allegiance to nation and state, to develop a standard orthodox approach to political affairs, and to make industrious, hard-working, obedient citizens of their unsophisticated wards. In short, the process of Americanization, as conducted in our public schools, was largely homogenization. Friedenberg and Mead have applauded the schools for a job well done in helping to assimilate our immigrants. However, they have criticized the schools for continuing to function as if their main task was to stir the melting pot long after the need has passed for such mixing on a massive scale. (20:72-95; 66:314-317) Mead has argued that it is dysfunctional in our dynamic industrialized society to inculcate devotion to some long-standing, but out-worn, traditions that may no longer fit present circumstances. She has suggested that a primary function of modern schools should be to teach children to cope with ever-present change. (66:319-320)

Another factor that may contribute to the ossification of political attitudes is that commitment to political beliefs in early childhood precedes knowledge of relevant political information, that early learning is based mainly upon emotional attachments rather than knowledge. Later cognitive learning often serves merely to reinforce these early commitments, to provide rational justification for a closed system of basic beliefs rather than reflective examination of tentatively held viewpoints.

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[33] Kurt Lewin has reported studies by R. Lippitt and R. White of autocratic and democratic learning atmospheres that support these conclusions. Children placed in a "democratic climate" tended to be relaxed, cooperative, constructive, and to develop a stable group structure. By contrast, children placed in an "autocratic social climate" tended to be anxious, uncooperative, passive toward authority, and hostile toward easily identifiable scapegoats. From these experimental results Lewin generalized "that the conduct of an entire population can be changed overnight rather deeply if the change in its social situation is sufficiently great." (55:464)

The tendencies of many Americans to exhibit political closed-mindedness, political apathy, political ignorance, and political intolerance, and the possibility that climates of opinion and educational atmospheres in our public schools may somewhat contribute to these tendencies, raises several important questions for social studies educators. Should young Americans be taught to critically inquire into all political traditions as the basic means for mitigating the above tendencies? If so, when is the appropriate time to formally initiate such inquiry? How can methods of critical inquiry be taught so as not to undermine loyalty to the political system, so as not to create alienation or cynicism? What place, if any, should indoctrination or propaganda have in an inquiry oriented school? Is it ever justifiable to indoctrinate children with basic political norms? Can formal instructional programs based upon techniques of reflective thinking and critical inquiry directly influence political values in the direction of political interest and tolerance?

Research has indicated that formal programs in political education do not have much impact upon the formation of political values. Is this mainly due to poor quality of instruction or inadequate course content? Persistent attempts to inculcate political values through textbook and classroom exhortations and prescriptions appear to have little or no positive influence upon political beliefs and behavior. Can persistent emphasis upon engaging the learner in active inquiry lead individuals to adopt new political orientations? Is it possible that formal political education programs that require individuals to reflectively examine their political beliefs could have a long-range impact upon political values, an impact that would not be discernable immediately, but that would show up at a much later time? Is it possible to sow the seeds in public school classrooms for later reformation of political attitudes, assuming that these "seeds" are reinforced by later experiences?

Research has indicated that most American children acquire strong positive, supportive attitudes about their political system and nation at an early age, and that most American adolescents and adults retain this generalized basic loyalty to state and nation, even in the face of contrary influences. Does this finding suggest that high school social studies teachers do not need to be mainly concerned with inculcating loyalty to state and nation? Does it indicate that teachers should not omit or gloss over controversial subjects on the grounds that this censorship protects students from sordid realities that could weaken their positive, supportive political orientations?

Most Americans do not appear to be very aware of the political attitudes they absorb from their culture, the process by which these attitudes are absorbed, or the consequences that may stem from holding these attitudes. The content of typical civics and government textbooks certainly does not contribute to this awareness. This lack of understanding of the political socialization process very likely produces rigidity, closed-mindedness, and political intolerance. Individuals who are ignorant of the cultural forces that shape them are likely to become enslaved by these forces. Would formal instruction about the process of political socialization mitigate closed-mindedness and increase devotion to democratic ideals? Would an understanding of the functions of political socialization, its significance, and its possible consequences enable individuals to exercise more effective control over their political decisions, to be somewhat more free and flexible in their political choices?

Another educational problem indicated by political socialization research relates to the political apathy and authoritarianism of many lower and working-class people. Would politicizing such individuals disrupt our political stability? How can the schools contribute to mass politicization without contributing to severe political disruption? Can the schools help to overcome the politically debilitating and destructive effects of family and neighborhood life among lower socio-economic status individuals?

The somewhat inadequate and superficial content of typical social studies textbooks suggests other questions upon which political socialization research might shed some light. To what extent does inadequate course content create discontinuities for young people between the artificial political world of the social studies classroom and the real political world? To what extent are these discontinuities debilitating to political competence? To what extent do social studies courses teach information that is dysfunctional in the adult political world? Would the addition to civics and government courses of basic concepts from the behavioral sciences make these courses more practicable?

Research indicates that young children become aware of first the national government, then local government, then state government. Yet many current social studies programs are built in line with the expanding environment curriculum plan, which requires the child to study first the neighborhood, then the local community, then the state, then the nation, and finally other nations. Should children study national government at an earlier age? Should study of national government or of alien political systems precede study of the neighborhood and city? Would these changes more adequately meet the interests of children?

Careful consideration of these questions raised by political socialization research is a prerequisite to any substantial efforts to improve political socialization strategies through formal education. Certainly many of these questions have been raised before, and school systems function on the basis of various responses to these questions. However, the findings of political socialization research, even in their present inchoate form, may lead educators to question some of the assumptions upon which these responses are based.

It is beyond the scope of this essay to offer thoroughgoing answers to the previously stated questions, although this writer's dispositions concerning answers to many of the questions have been suggested or alluded to throughout the essay. These dispositions reflect liberal democratic political attitudes that have permeated the intellectual history of Western man. The continuing strength and vitality of American society is viewed as stemming from our democratic aspirations, such as the ideals expressed in our Bill of Rights. Therefore, this writer deplores any aspects of the political socialization process, as it functions in our society, that tend in the direction of authoritarianism or autocracy, of closed-mindedness and intolerance, and of mitigation of our most cherished ideals of individual rights and freedoms and equal opportunities.

In accord with this ideological orientation, one might interpret the findings of political socialization research as leading to the conclusion that fresh positive efforts should be made to improve the political socialization strategies of American schools, to help overcome tendencies to form closed-minded attachments to political beliefs that breed intolerance and unreasonable resistance to potentially beneficial political changes. This does not mean more efficient inculcation of a particular set of "correct beliefs" or the prescription of the "proper values" that all good American youth should absorb. High school civics and government courses have been bogged down in this quagmire far too long. Social reconstructionism according to a preconceived blueprint of immutable "truths" is certainly not consistent with the previously mentioned ideological orientation. Rather it is assumed that central to the improvement of political socialization strategies of secondary schools should be efforts to keep the socialization process open-ended by providing young people with the tools to reflectively think about their beliefs, with dispositions to critically examine traditional practices, and with an educational atmosphere conducive to reflective thinking. This approach to improve political socialization through formal instruction would involve a revision of current civics and government courses to bring them into line with current scholarship; it would involve discarding many American myths that are taught as facts in typical civics and government courses and that may be dysfunctional in the real political world; it would involve teaching students skills of reflective thinking; it would involve creating an academic environment conducive to creativity, free expression, inquiry, and open-mindedness; it would involve giving high school youth considerable opportunities for meaningful decision-making. As Lane and Sears have said, "By pouring civic information and historical knowledge into students, instead of teaching them how to think and analyze social problems, our educational system misses its great opportunity." (52:115) If secondary school political education programs move in the direction suggested by these ideas, then perhaps a beginning will be made toward improving the approach of American schools to their culturally ordained task of contributing to the political socialization of the young.

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